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THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE.

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THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE

IDEAS OF 1848.

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BY

ERNEST RENAN.

"Hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis et caro de carne mea."

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HA
1891.

Translated by ALBERT D. VANDAM *to page* 284, C. B. PITMAN *from page* 284, *and Notes corresponding.*

PREFACE.

THE year 1848 made an exceedingly keen impression upon me. Until then I had never given a thought to socialistic problems. Those problems, starting from the earth, as it were, and frightening people, got hold of my mind and became an integral part of my philosophy. A paper on the study of Greek in the Middle Ages which I had begun in answer to a question of l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres had engrossed all my thoughts. After that I passed my examination as Doctor of Philosophy in September. Towards October I felt myself again. I felt the need of summing up in a volume the new faith which with me had replaced shattered Catholicism. This took me the last two months of 1848 and the first four or five months of 1849. The beginner's naïve but ambitious dream was to publish that big volume there and then. On the 15th July, 1849, I gave an extract from it to *La Liberté de Penser* with a note to the effect that the volume would appear in a few weeks.

It was a great piece of presumption indeed. About the time I wrote those lines, M. Victor Le Clerc bethought himself to have me, in conjunction with my friend Charles Daremberg, entrusted with

various researches in the public libraries of Italy in connection with the literary history of France and a thesis I had begun on Averroism. This journey which lasted eight months influenced my mind very materially. The artistic side of life which had till then been almost closed to me revealed itself resplendent and comforting. A fairy wielding an enchanting power seemed to say to me what the Church in her hymn says to the wood of the Cross.

Flecte ramos, arbor alta,
Tensa laxa viscera,
Et rigor lentescat ille
Quem dedit nativitas.

A sort of soothing breeze made me unbend, nearly all my illusions of 1848 vanished as utterly impossible of realization. I became aware of the fatal necessities of human society, resigned to a state of things in which a great deal of evil is the necessary condition of a small amount of good, in which an imperceptible quantity of aroma is extracted from an enormous *caput mortuum* of spoiled matter.

I became reconciled in certain respects to the reality, and when on my return I took up the book written a twelvemonth before I found it to be harsh, dogmatic, sectarian and hard.

My thought in its primary shape lay on my back like a load sticking out on all sides and getting entangled everywhere. My ideas too autocratic for conversation were still less fit for publication as a whole. Germany, whose pupil I had been for some years, had made me too much in her own image and that in a kind of production in which she does not shine, in "book-making." I felt convinced

that French readers would find all this insufferably clumsy.

I consulted several friends, especially Augustin Thierry, who treated me like a son. This worthy man finally persuaded me not to make my *entrée* in the literary world with this enormous bundle on my head. He predicted a complete failure with the public and advised me to proceed piecemeal, to contribute to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and to the *Journal des Débats* articles on various subjects in which I would get rid retail of the stock of ideas which presented in compact bulk would inevitably frighten the reader. The boldness of the theories would in that way be less likely to shock people's notions. Men of the world often accept in small doses what they refuse to swallow as a whole.

A little while after M. de Sacy encouraged me to do the same thing. The old Jansenist was fully alive to my heresies. When I read my articles to him I noticed his smile at every respectful or cajoling sentence.

There is no doubt that the huge volume whence all this came with its heavy style and very indifferent literary form would have simply horrified him. It was plain enough that if I meant to appeal to cultivated people, I should be bound to leave a great deal of my baggage at the door. My ideas dawn upon me in an involved way, they only become clear after a labour similar to that of a gardener who trims a tree, lops away its dead branches and trains it against the wall.

In that way I retailed the huge volume which thanks to sound advice and friendly counsel had been consigned to the bottom of one of my drawers.

The Coup d'État which happened shortly afterwards had the effect of binding me more firmly to the *Revue Deux Mondes* and the *Journal des Débats*, in my disgust at the people who on the 2nd December greeted the signs of grief of the honest citizen with ironical smiles. I was engrossed with special studies, travel, my "Origins of Christianity" left me no time to think of anything else for twenty-five years. I made up my mind that the old MSS. should be published after my death, that it would then afford pleasure to a select section of enlightened minds, that it might succeed perhaps in fixing on me once more that attention of the world of which the dead stand in so much need in the unequal competition the living thrust upon them in that respect.

My life having been prolonged beyond my expectations I lately made up my mind to be my own publisher. I flattered myself that perhaps some people would read these ancient, honest pages not without profit to themselves and that the rising generation especially, which seems to be somewhat uncertain about its road, would be pleased to find out how a young man, very frank and very sincere thought forty years ago, face to face with himself only. Young people like the work of young people.

In my writings intended for men and women of the world I have been compelled to make many sacrifices. In the following pages which have undergone no process of boiling down the reader will meet with the young, conscientious Breton lad who one day ran away frightened from Saint-Sulpice because he fancied that part of what his masters had told him was perhaps not strictly true. A day may come when the critics will maintain that the *Revue*

des Deux Mondes and the *Journal des Débats* spoilt me insomuch that they taught me to write, that is, constantly to condense and prune my ideas. That day they may perhaps like these pages for which I only claim one merit, that of showing in his natural and as yet uncorrupted state and suffering from violent inflammation of the brain a young man living solely with his own thoughts and believing frantically in the truth.

In fact, the blemishes of this first work are enormous, and if I had the slightest literary pride, I should have suppressed it altogether. The way I introduced my ideas lacks the commonest skill. It is a dinner in which the primary materials are good but which has been cooked and served up anyhow, the parings of the various ingredients not even having been removed. I was too anxious not to lose anything. Lest I should not be understood I insisted too much, in order to drive home the nail I fancied myself bound to knock with all my might. The art of composing implying the cutting away of the tangled growths that might obstruct the light in "the forest of thought" was unknown to me. No one is brief at his first start.

The clearness and tact exacted by the French which, I am bound to confess, compel one to say only part of what one thinks and are damaging to depth of thought seemed to me so much tyranny. The French only care to express that which is clear, as it happens the most important truths, those that relate to the transformations of life are not clear; one only perceives them in a kind of half-light. That is why, after having been the first to perceive the truth of what is called Darwinism nowadays, France has

been the last to rally to it. They saw it well enough, but it was out of the beaten track of the language, it did not fit the mould of well-constructed phrases. In that way France passed by the side of precious truths not without seeing them, but simply flinging them among the waste paper as useless or impossible to express. At the start I wanted to say everything and I often said it badly. At the risk of tumbling into the realm of the unintelligible I endeavoured to fix the fleeting essence, hitherto considered as not worthy of consideration.

However much and wisely or the reverse I may have modified my habits of style as regards exposition as little have I changed my fundamental ideas from the moment I began to think for myself. My religion is now as ever the progress of reason, in other words the progress of science. But in looking over these pages of my youth, I often found a certain confusion which distorted certain deductions. Intensive culture constantly adding to the sum total of human knowledge is not the same thing as extensive culture disseminating that knowledge more and more for the welfare of the countless human beings in existence. The sheet of water in expanding continues to lose in depth. Towards 1700 Newton had acquired views on the system by which the earth was governed infinitely superior to everything that had been thought out before him without his matchless discoveries having in the least affected the education of the people. On the other hand one might reasonably conceive a state of exceedingly perfect elementary education without the higher sciences deriving much benefit therefrom. Our real motive for advocating elementary education is that a nation without education is fanatical and

that fanatical nations are dangerous to science, governments being in the habit of shackling freedom of thought in the names of popular beliefs and the so-called sanctity of family institutions.

Hence, the idea of a state of civilization with a levelling mission, such as it is presented in a few pages of this book is nothing more than a dream. A school in which the pupils would make the laws would be a sorry school indeed. Enlightenment, morality, art will always be represented among mankind by a magistracy, by a minority, preserving the traditions of the true, the good and the beautiful. But we must be on our guard against this magistracy disposing of the public forces and appealing to superstition and imposture in order to maintain its power.

There were also a great many illusions in my acceptance of the socialistic ideas of 1848 in bygone days. While still believing that science alone is capable of improving the unhappy lot of man here below, I have ceased to believe in the solution of the problem being as near as I believed it to be then. Inequality is one of nature's written laws, it is the consequence of liberty and the liberty of the individual is a necessary postulate of human progress. This progress implies a great sacrifice of individual happiness. The actual condition of humanity, for instance, demands the maintenance of separate nations which are establishments exceedingly heavy to bear. A condition which would afford the greatest possible happiness to individuals would probably, from the point of view of the ennobling pursuits of mankind, be a condition of profound abasement.

The main error with which these old pages teem is an exaggerated optimism which fails or is determined not to see that evil still exists and that we have to pay dearly, that is in privileges, the power that protects us against this evil. The reader will also notice an old leaven of Catholicism; the idea that we shall behold once more the age of belief when a compulsory and universal religion will prevail as it prevailed in the first half of the Middle Ages. Heaven preserve us from being saved in that fashion. Uniformity of belief, that is, fanaticism, can only come back in this world of ours in company with the ignorance and credulity of bygone centuries. I would by far have an immoral people than a fanatical people for immoral masses are by no means difficult to deal with while fanatical masses reduce the world to a state of imbecility, and a world condemned to a state of imbecility has no longer any claim on my interest; I would as lief see it perish. Let us suppose every orange tree to be smitten with a disease impossible of cure except on the condition of its no longer producing oranges. It would be so much time wasted seeing that the orange tree which does not produce oranges is worthless.

In order not to make this publication utterly devoid of all interest I had to submit to one condition, namely; to reproduce my essay in its simple, matted, often abrupt form. I might just as well have written a new book as have attempted to correct numberless inaccuracies, to modify a great number of thoughts which at present appear to me either expressed in an exaggerated manner or which are no longer just, and moreover the framework of my old essay is by no means such as I would choose to-

day.* Hence, I confined myself to the striking out of mistakes resulting from carelessness, those big blunders which one only notices in proof and which would assuredly have been corrected if I had published the book in times gone by. I have left the notes as a whole at the end of the volume. Many a passage will provoke a smile on the reader's part. It will make no difference to me as long as he, the reader, acknowledges that these pages contain the expression of great intellectual rectitude and perfect sincerity.

A great difficulty resulting from my decision of printing my *purana* as it stands was the resemblance between certain pages of the present work and many of works published before, a resemblance which cannot fail to strike the reader. Besides the fragment published in *La Liberté de Penser* which has been reproduced in my "Contemporary Essays," there are many other passages that have found their way either as regards the mere idea or as regards both the idea and its expression in several of my writings, notably in those belonging to my first period. I tried at first to excise this dualism, but it soon became patent to me that the book would not stand on its legs at all in that way. The parts that had been repeated were the most important, the whole structure, like a wall from which the most necessary stones have been abstracted, was toppling over. The simplest way out of the difficulty, I thought, was to appeal to the indulgence of the reader. Those who

* I have left all the passages in which I presented German culture as being synonymous with aspiration towards the idealistic. They were true when I penned them. It is not I who have changed.

do me the honour of reading my writings in the order they were written will, I trust, pardon those repetitions, if the present volume should succeed in showing them my ideas arranged and combined in a way that may present something novel and interesting to them.

In attempting to strike a balance between what has remained merely so much vision and what has been realized in those dreams of half a century ago I must confess to a feeling of appreciable moral satisfaction. After all, I was right. Excepting a few disappointments progress has travelled on the lines laid down in my imagination. At that period I did not see sufficiently clearly what man had left behind in the purely animal kingdom, I had not a sufficiently clear perception of the inequality of races but I had a just conception of what I may call the origin of life.

I perceived well enough that everything is accomplished in humanity and nature, that creation has no part nor parcel in the series of effects and causes. Too little of a naturalist to track the paths of life in the labyrinth which we see without seeing it, I was a determined evolutionist in all that appertains to the productions of humanity, language, literature, social forms, writings. I began to perceive that the morphological draughtboard of the vegetal and animal species was indeed the indication of a genesis; that everything is born in accordance with a design of which we can only see the obscure canvas. The aim of science is an immense development of which the cosmological sciences give us the first perceptible links, of which history proper shows us the last expansions. Like Hegel I made the mistake of being

too confident in attributing to mankind a central part in the universe.

The whole of human development may be of no more consequence than the moss or lichen with which every moist surface is covered. To us, though, the history of man stands first and foremost, seeing that humanity alone creates the conscience of the universe. A plant's only worth lies in its producing flowers, fruit, aroma, nourishing tubercules, which are of no account as a mass, if they are compared to the mass of the plant itself, but which possess the character of finality in a much greater degree than the leaves, branches and trunk.

Historical science and its auxiliaries, philological sciences, have made immense conquests since I took to them so fondly forty years ago. But the end can already be foreseen. In another century mankind will pretty well know everything that can be known about its past; and then it will be time to stop, because the tendency of these studies is to begin their own destruction the moment they have reached comparative perfection. The danger of a revival of superstition will alone keep up the habit of critical disquisition at first hand.

The history of religion has been cleared up in its most important branches. It has become patent, not from *a priori* arguments, but from the very discussion of evidence that in the centuries open to men's researches there has been neither revelation nor supernatural fact. The onward course of civilization has been made manifest in its general laws. The inferiority of certain races to others is proved. The claims of each human family to a more or less honourable mention in the history of progress are pretty well decided.

With regard to the political and social sciences, one may safely say that progress during the last forty years has been slow. The old political economy whose pretensions were so noisily shouted forth in 1848, has been wrecked. Socialism which has been taken up again by the Germans so earnestly and with so much study continues to trouble the world without arriving at a clear solution. Prince Bismarck who was to have stopped its progress in five years by means of repressive legislation has evidently been mistaken, at any rate this time. What appears very probable indeed is that there will be no end of socialism. But assuredly the socialism that will gain the victory will be different from the Utopism of 1848. A keen observer might have seen in the year 300 of our era that Christianity will not end, but ought also to have seen that the world will not end, that the latter will adapt the former to its needs and out of a belief destructive of all society, will make a sedative, a political machine, conservative to a degree.

In politics the situation is by no means more clear. The national principle has since 1848 been developed to an extraordinary extent. Representative government is established nearly everywhere.

But evident signs of the fatigue caused by national burdens are looming on the horizon. Patriotism is becoming local, national enthusiasm decreases. Modern nations resemble the heroes borne down by their armour, on the tomb of Maximilian at Innsbruck, ricketty bodies with iron masters over them. France who was the pioneer on that road will, following ordinary laws be the first to react against the movement she started. In fifty years the

national principle will be on the decline. The terrible harshness of the proceedings by which the ancient monarchial States obtained the sacrifice of the individual will have become impossible in free States; scarcely any one nowadays cares to provide the materials for those towers of Tamerlane, built up with corpses. In fact, it has become too clear that the happiness of the individual is not in direct proportion to the grandeur of the nation to which he belongs, and as a rule one generation cares very little about the why or wherefore a preceding generation has sacrificed its life.

These variations spring from the uncertainty of our ideas with regard to the object to be attained and the higher end of humanity. Between the two objects held out by political life, the grandeur of nations, and welfare of individuals the choice is prompted by interest or passion. There is no hint afforded to us either as to nature's will or the aim of the universe. For us, idealists, there exists but one true doctrine, the transcendental doctrine according to which the aim of humanity consists in constituting a loftier consciousness of the universe, or as we used to say, the highest glory of God; but it is very clear that this doctrine will afford no basis for a practical policy. Such an aim must, on the contrary, be carefully dissimulated. Men would revolt if they knew they were being thus exploited.

How long will national spirit be able to hold out against individual egotism? Who, in centuries to come, will have served humanity most, the patriot, the liberal, the reactionary, the *savant?* No one knows and still it would be a capital thing to know, for what is good in one of these hypotheses is bad

in the other. One works the switches without knowing whither one wants to go. According to the goal to be reached France is doing either detestable or excellent work. Other nations are more enlightened. Politics are like a desert in which one marches at random towards the north or towards the south; for we must keep on marching. No one knows where the good lies in the social order. There is one comfort, one is sure to land somewhere. In the kind of rifle competition with which humanity is amusing itself the mark hit is supposed to be the mark aimed at. In that way the good and true men always have a clear conscience. For the rest, in the existing state of general doubt, liberty in any case, has its value, since it is a means of allowing free play to the secret spring which moves humanity, and carries it along with or against its will.

To sum up; if through the constant labour of the nineteenth century the knowledge of facts has considerably increased, the destiny of mankind has on the other hand become more obscure than ever. The serious thing is that we fail to perceive a means of providing humanity in the future with a catechism that will be acceptable henceforth, except on the condition of returning to a state of credulity. Hence, it is possible that the ruin of idealistic beliefs may be fated to follow hard upon the ruin of supernatural beliefs and that the real abasement of the morality of humanity will date from the day it has seen the reality of things. Chimeras have succeeded in obtaining from the good gorilla an astonishing moral effort; do away with the chimeras and part of the factitious energy they aroused will disappear. Even glory, as a motive-power implies in some respects

immortality, the fruit of it generally coming only after death. Suppress the alcohol on which the workman has hitherto relied for his strength, but you must not ask him for the same amount of work.

Candidly speaking, I fail to see how, without the ancient dreams, the foundations of a happy and noble life are to be relaid. The hypothesis that the true sage would be he who, barring to himself all distant horizons, would confine himself to the perspective of mere vulgar gratification, this perspective, I say, is absolutely repugnant to us. However, man's happiness and noble aims have rested before now on false foundations. The wisest thing to do, then, is to go on enjoying the supreme gifts vouchsafed to us, life and the faculty of seeing the reality. Science will always remain the gratification of the noblest craving of our nature; curiosity; it will always supply man with the sole means of improving his lot. It protects him against error, though it may not reveal the truth to him, but there is an advantage in being certain of not being duped. Man fashioned according to this discipline is on the whole a better man than the instinctive man of the ages of faith. He is not subject to the errors to which the uncultured fatally yield, he is more enlightened, he commits fewer crimes, he is less sublime, but he is also less ridiculous. All this, it will be said, is not worth the heaven science takes away from us. First of all, who knows whether it does take it away; secondly people are none the poorer for being robbed of bogus shares and false banknotes. A little true science is better than a great deal of bad science. One is less liable to error by confessing one's ignor-

ance than by fancying that one knows a great many things one knows not.

Consequently I was right at the outset of my intellectual career firmly to believe in science and to make it the object of my life. If I had to begin again I should do exactly as I have done, and during the little time that remains to me I shall go on as I began.

Immortality means to labour at a lasting work. According to the primitive Christian idea, the true one, only those shall rise again who have contributed to the divine work; furthering God's kingdom on earth. The punishment of the wicked and frivolous will be utter annihilation. Here a formidable objection starts up against us. Can science be more everlasting than humanity whose end is written down from the very fact of its having had a beginning? It matters not; human reason has not been engaged consecutively for more than a hundred years on the problem of matters mundane. It has already made some wonderful discoveries that have increased man's power a hundred, nay a thousandfold. What then will it be a hundred thousand years hence? And pray remember that no truth is ever lost, that no error ever strikes root. All this makes us feel secure. We are really afraid of nothing except of the falling-in of the sky, and even if the sky came crashing down we should still go to sleep quietly with the thought, "The Being of whom we were the transitory blossom has always been, always will be."

To Monsieur Eugène Burnouf, Member of the Academy, Professor at the Collége de France.

MONSIEUR,

During the last twelvemonth my thoughts have frequently gone back to that memorable 25th February 1848, when after having scaled the barricades to get to the Collége de France we found our modest room transformed into a guardroom, to which we were welcomed like so many suspected individuals. That day I asked myself more seriously than ever whether a man could do better than devote every moment of his life to study and to thought, and after having consulted my conscience and strengthened my faith in human intellect, I resolutely answered; "No." If science were nothing more than an agreeable pastime, a kind of diversion for the idle, a mere costly ornament, a hobby for the amateur, in short *the least vain of all vanities*, there might be times when the *savant* would have occasion to say with the poet;

"Shame to him who sings, the while Rome burns."

But if science be a serious matter, if the destinies of mankind and the perfection of the individual be bound up with it, if it be a religion, it has like matters of religion its value every day, every moment of our lives. To devote to study and intellectual culture only our moments of peace and leisure is an insult to the human intellect, it is tacitly supposing that there is something more important than the pursuit of truth. If such were indeed the case, if science were only a matter of second rate importance how could the man who has resolved to devote his

life to the attainment of the perfect, who wishes to be able to say at his last moments; "I have accomplished my task," how could that man devote so much as a single hour to it, when he knows that higher duties claim him?

That revolutions and the dread of the future offer a temptation to science ignorant of its aim, to science that has never endeavoured to ascertain its own value and true significance, is easily understood. As for serious and philosophical science which responds to a want of human nature, no social upheavals will succeed in affecting it, they may, on the contrary, be of use to it, by causing it to take itself to task, to verify its titles, to be no longer satisfied with the mere perfunctory judgment on which it was wont to base itself formerly.

These are the reflections, Monsieur, I have made for myself, while remaining isolated and calm amidst the universally prevailing agitation; and which I have embodied in these pages. Thanks to the sentiments with which they have inspired me, I have gone through many a sad day without cursing any one, full of trust in the natural rectitude of human reason and its necessary tendency towards a more enlightened, consequently a more moral and happier state. I hesitated a good deal before making up my mind to disclose in this way the thoughts of my youth, the critic of which I may become perhaps when older, and which no doubt will have but scant value to those further advanced on the road of science. Still, I fancied that some young people enamoured of the beautiful and true might derive comfort and strength from this confidence of mine amidst the struggles which every distinguished mind is bound to wage at a

certain age in order to find out and to shape for himself the ideal of his life. I also wanted, at the outset of my scientific career to proclaim my deeply rooted belief in human reason and modern intelligence, at a moment when so many faint-hearted brethren drop tired and spent into the arms of those who profess to regret ignorance while they anathematize criticism. I would fain warn those who take advantage of our weakness, who discount beforehand our misfortunes, who found their hopes on the intellectual fatigue and depression resulting from great suffering, I would fain warn those against thinking that the generation just entering upon "the life of thought" is theirs. We shall be able to uphold the tradition of the modern spirit both against those who wish to bring back the past and against who those aim at substituting for our living multiple civilization a kind of architectural and petrified condition of society like that in which the pyramids were built.

It is not a mere commonplace sentiment which prompts the dedication of this essay to you. It was really thought out before you. Whenever, in my inward hesitations, my scientific ideal seemed to become obscured the thought of you was sufficient to dispel the clouds, you were the answer to all my doubts. It is your image I have had constantly before me when trying to express the lofty ideal which conceives life not as a part to be played or as an intrigue to be accomplished successfully, but as something earnest and true. In listening to your lectures on the most beautiful of languages and literatures of the primitive world I realized what until then had been only a dream; science becoming philosophy and the highest results springing from the most scrupulous analysis of details.

It is to this living proof that I would invite all those whom I may not be able to convince of my favourite thesis; that the science of the human intellect must be above all the history of the human intellect; and this history only becomes possible by the patient and philological study of the works it has produced at its different epochs.

Believe me, Monsieur,
Your respectful and admiring pupil,
ERNEST RENAN.

PARIS, *March*, 1849.

THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

"BUT ONE THING IS NEEDFUL." I grant in its widest philosophical bearing this precept of the Great Teacher of morality. I look upon it as the principle of every life striving to be noble, as the expressive formula—though dangerous in its briefness—of human nature from the point of view of morality and duty. The first step of him who aspires to wisdom, as respectable antiquity expressed it, is to divide his life into two parts; the first, commonplace and having nothing sacred in it, consisting of wants and indulgences of an inferior order (material existence, pleasure, wealth, etc.); the other, which may be termed the ideal one, heavenly, divine, disinterested, taking as its aim the purer forms of truth, beauty, moral goodness. In other words, to employ the most comprehensive expression hallowed by reverence in the past, God Himself; God Himself, ever felt, ever perceived, ever touched in His thousand forms by the intelligent perception of all that is true, by the love of all that is beautiful. This is the great opposition of the *body* and the *soul* recognized by all religions, by all lofty philosophical systems; an opposition superficial indeed if it be meant to denote a dual substance in the human being, but perfectly true, if judiciously enlarging the sense of these two

words and applying them to two orders of phenomena, we take them as signifying the two roads of life open to man. To admit the distinction between these two roads, is tantamount to admitting that the higher life, the ideal one is everything, and that the lower, the life spent in pursuit of pleasure and interest is nothing, that the latter disappears before the former as the finite before the infinite, and that if practical wisdom commands us to think of it, it is only in view and as a condition of the first-named.

I am aware that, by leading off with such ponderous truths I have virtually written myself down a slow-coach. But I am utterly without shame on this point. For many years already I have elected to take my stand among the simple and dull-witted who take things conscientiously. I am sufficiently weak-minded to look upon that pretence at delicacy which refuses to take life as a serious and sacred business as unbecoming, and very easy to imitate; and if there were no alternative I should prefer the most narrow dogmatism to this flippancy which one honours too much by calling it scepticism, the more appropriate names for it being sheer folly and trash. If it were true that human life is nothing more than a profitless succession of vulgar facts without any higher worth than that derived from the senses, the first serious reflection would lead man to make away with himself; there would be no choice between intoxication, a tyrannical occupation of one's every moment and suicide. To live the intellectual life, to inhale the infinite through every pore, to endeavour to realize the beautiful, to attain the perfect, each according to his ability, that is the only thing needful; all the rest is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Christian asceticism in proclaiming this grand simplification of life understood the one thing needful in so narrow a spirit that its principle became in the course of time a galling yoke to the human intellect. Not only did it wholly neglect

the true and the beautiful (philosophy, science, poetry being mere "vanities"), but in clinging exclusively to the good, it conceived it in the meanest spirit. The good according to it meant the realization of the will of a superior being, a kind of *subjection* humiliating to human dignity; because the realization of moral good no more means obedience to imposed laws than the realization of the beautiful in a work of art means the carrying out of certain rules. Consequently human nature was mangled in its most noble members. In matters intellectual, which are all equally holy, a distinction was made between the sacred and the profane. The profane, thanks to the instincts of nature which happened to be stronger than the principles of an artificial asceticism, was not altogether banished; though "vanity," it was tolerated; sometimes Christian asceticism went even so far as to call it the least vain of vanities, but if it had been consistent the profane would have been pitilessly proscribed; it was considered a mere weakness of which the ascetically perfect would have none. It was a fatal distinction which poisoned the existence of many free and beautiful natures born to relish the ideal in all its infinity and whose lives were spent in sadness, crushed in the grip of the fatal vice. Oh, the struggles it has cost me! The first philosophical victory of my youth was to proclaim from the depth of my conscience that, "Everything appertaining to the soul is sacred."

Hence, it is no narrow limit which I am laying down for human nature in suggesting to its activity one thing only as being worthy of it, for this sole thing contains the infinite. It only excludes the commonplace, which has no value except in so far as it is felt and at the moment it is felt; and this inferior sphere is far more circumscribed than is generally believed. There are very few things in human life altogether profane. Our moral and intellectual progress will disclose new standpoints

that will invest acts in appearance most homely with an ideal value. Has not Christianity, aided by the instincts of the Celtic and Germanic races, raised to the dignity of an æsthetic and moral sentiment a fact viewed by the whole of antiquity—with the exception of Plato perhaps—as a mere gratification of the senses? Has not the act of nutrition, the most material of life, received a most admirable mystic significance at the hands of the first Christians? Manual labour which nowadays is scarcely anything else but an irksome and brutalizing penalty to those condemned to it, was not such to the craftsmen of the Middle Ages who built cathedrals singing as they built. Who knows but what one day the sight of the general welfare of humanity for whom the work is constructed may soften and sanctify the sweat on the workman's brow? For from the point of view of humanity the most lowly works have an ideal worth seeing that they are the means or at any rate the implied condition of mental conquest. The sanctifying of the material lower life by outward ceremonies and practices is a trait common to all religions. The progress of rationalism at once—and without much merit—proclaimed these ceremonies so many acts of pure superstition. What has been the result? Baulked in its attempts at idealizing, life has become something profane, vulgar, prosaic, so much so that for certain acts in which the need of religious significance was more deeply felt, such as for instance in birth, marriage, and death, the world has preserved the ancient ceremonies, though it may no longer have faith in their efficacy. I am inclined to think that eventual progress will reconcile those two tendencies by substituting moral sentiment in all its purity for sacramental acts, whose only value lies in their signification, and which viewed in their material execution are utterly inefficacious.

Hence, everything connected with the higher life of man, the life by which he is distinguished from

the animal, is sacred and deserving of the passionate devotion of high-minded natures. A beautiful sentiment is worth a beautiful thought; a beautiful thought is worth a beautiful action. A system of philosophy is worth a poem, a poem is worth a scientific discovery; a life spent in the pursuit of science is as good as a life spent in the practice of virtue. The perfect man will be he who is a poet, a philosopher, a *savant*, and a virtuous man in one and that not at intervals (periodically) and at distinct moments—for in that case he would only be such in a restricted sense—but by an intimate simultaneous interpenetration at every moment of his life, who will be a poet at the same time that he is a philosopher, a philosopher at the same time that he is a *savant*, in whom, in one word, all the elements of humanity will be blended in a superior harmony, as in collective humanity itself. The weakness of our age of analysis does not allow of such an elevated degree of unity; life has become a trade, a profession, a man is compelled to advertise his title as a poet, artist or *savant*, create for himself a little world of his own in which he lives apart without understanding anything beyond, nay, often denying that anything beyond exists. That this is a necessity of the actual condition of the human intellect, it is impossible to deny; nevertheless we are bound to admit that such a system of life, though warranted by the necessity of it, is contrary to human dignity and the perfection of the individual. Tested as man a Newton, a Cuvier, a Heyne sounds less beautiful than an antique sage, a Solon or a Pythagoras for instance. The final aim of man is not to know, to feel, to imagine, but to be perfect, that is, to be man in every acceptation of the word; to represent in an individual type a condensed picture of complete humanity, and to show blended in one powerful unit all the aspects of life which humanity has sketched at different epochs and places. Man too frequently fancies that morality and morality alone constitutes

perfection, that the pursuit of the true and the beautiful is nothing more than a mere enjoyment, that the upright man is the perfect man, such, for instance, as the Moravian brother. The model of perfection is afforded to us by humanity itself, the most perfect life is that which best represents the whole of humanity. And cultured humanity is not only moral, it is also learned, inquiring, poetical, impassioned.

To think that the individual man may one day embrace the whole field of intellectual culture would no doubt be carrying one's hopes for the future of humanity beyond the limits observed by the boldest Utopian. But there are in the various branches of art and science two totally distinct elements which though equally necessary to the production of work scientific or artistic, contribute in a very unequal measure to the perfection of the individual; there is on one side the technical process, the practical skill, indispensable to the discovery of the true, the realization of the beautiful; on the other the mind that creates and animates, the soul that breathes life into the work of art, the great law that lends significance and value to such and such a scientific discovery. It will always be impossible for the same man to handle with the same skill the painter's brush, the musician's instrument, the chemist's apparatus. In all this there is a special education and a practical skill which, to become spontaneous habit calling for no previous consideration demands a life's practice. But that which may become possible in a more advanced form of intellectual culture is the sentiment that endows the composition of the poet or artist with life, the penetration of the philosopher or the *savant*, the moral sense of a lofty nature being united in order to make but one soul, sympathetic with everything that is good, true and beautiful, to constitute a moral type of humanity in the aggregate, an ideal which without being realized in this man or that may be to the future generations what

Christ has been to the past eighteen centuries, namely—a Christ who would no longer represent only the moral side in its highest power, but furthermore the æsthetic and scientific side of humanity.

For after all, all these categories of pure forms perceptible to the intellect constitute but the facets of a same unity. Divergence only begins at a lower level. There is a great central focus in which poetry, science and morality are identical, in which to know, to admire, and to love are one and the same thing, in which all opposing sentiments drop away, in which human nature recognizes the high harmony of all its faculties and that grand act of adoration which sums up the tendency of its whole being towards the everlasting infinite, in the identity of its aim. The saint is he who devotes his life to this grand ideal and votes all the rest useless.

Pascal has shown the necessarily pernicious circle of the positive life in a masterly way. Man labours to obtain rest and then rest becomes unbearable. He does not enjoy life, but only expects to enjoy it. The fact is that worldly people have no well defined system of life—at any rate, as far as I can see. They cannot exactly say what is essential, what is accessory, they are not sure what is the end and what the means. Wealth cannot be the final aim seeing that it has no value except in the enjoyments it procures. Nevertheless, we see the most serious faculties frittered away in the acquisition of wealth and pleasure is looked upon as a relaxation only for lost moments and useless years. The philosopher and the religious man only can take their fill of rest at any moment, seize upon and profit by the fleeting hour without postponing anything to the future.

A man said once to a philosopher of antiquity that he did not think he was born to be a philosopher. "You poor, unfortunate mortal," replied the sage; "for what then do you think you were born?" No doubt if philosophy were a specialty, a profession like any other, if to philosophize meant to study

or to seek the solution of a certain number of more or less important questions, then the reply of the sage would be singularly nonsensical. And yet if we understand philosophy in its proper sense, the man who is not a philosopher, that is, who has not succeeded in grasping the loftier meaning of life is indeed a wretched being. A great many people equally willingly give up the title of poet. If to be a poet meant the skilful use of the mechanism of language they would be excusable. But if we understand by poetry the soul's faculty of being touched in a certain way, of yielding a response of a particular and undefinable nature when face to face with the beauty of things, he who is not a poet is not a man, and to give up the title is tantamount to abdicating voluntarily the dignity of his nature.

If needs were illustrious examples could be found to prove that this lofty harmony of the powers of human nature is not an idle fancy. The lives of men of genius nearly always present the delightful sight of vast intellectual capacity allied to very lofty poetical sentiment and charming good nature, to a degree such as to make in most cases their lives in their serene and sweet tranquillity their most beautiful work of all and an essential part of their complete works. Really and truly the words poetry, philosophy, art, science do not signify so much diverse objects offered to the intellectual activity of man as different ways of looking at the same object which is simply existence itself in all its manifestations. That is why there is no great philosopher who is not at the same time a poet; the great artist is often much more of a philosopher than those who bear the name. All these are merely so many different forms, which like those of literature are capable of expressing everything. Béranger found means to say everything in the guise of songs, another haply in the guise of novels, a third in the guise of history. All genius is universal with regard to the object of its efforts and the small minds are just as wrong in trying

to establish the exclusive pre-eminence of their art as the great men are right in maintaining that their art is the whole of man, seeing that it enables them, in fact to express that which cannot be divided; namely —the soul, God.

Nevertheless one is bound to admit that the secret to blend those diverse elements is as yet, not found. In the actual condition of human intelligence a nature too richly endowed suffers constant martyrdom. The man born with one eminent faculty which absorbs all the others is far happier than the one who is always discovering within himself new wants which he cannot satisfy. He would need one life to acquire knowledge, another to feel and to love, a third to act, or to speak correctly he would like to lead abreast a series of parallel existences, while still possessing in one superior unity the simultaneous consciousness of each of these. Limited by time and extraneous necessities, his concentrated activity burns itself out inwardly. He requires so much time to live for himself that he finds none to live for the outer world. He does not wish to lose an atom of this all-devouring, multiple existence which escapes him and which he himself devours hurriedly and greedily. He rolls from one world on to another or rather worlds badly harmonized jostle one another in his breast. He envies in turns—for he is capable of understanding in turns—the simple soul that lives by love and faith, the virile nature that takes life like a muscular athlete, the critical and penetrating intellect which enjoys the handling of its exact and certain instrument at leisure. Then, when he finds out the impossibility of realizing this multiple ideal, when he sees how short, how fatally incomplete, how necessarily divided is life, when he reflects that whole sides of his rich and fruitful nature will never emerge from semi-obscurity a reaction sets in full of unparalleled bitterness. He anathematizes this superabundance of life which only leads to his wearing himself out without result, or if he throws his energy on

some extraneous work, he still suffers in being unable to throw more than a part of himself into it. No sooner has he realized one side of life than a thousand others just as beautiful flash upon, deceive and lead him on in their turn until the day comes when he is bound to give up and when casting a glance behind he can say at last with some comfort to himself; "I have lived a great deal." It is the first time he has found his reward.

CHAPTER II.

To know is the keyword of the creed of natural religion; for to know is the first condition of the commerce of mankind with the things that are, of the penetrating study of the universe, which is the intellectual life of the individual; to know is self-initiation to God. By ignorance man is as it were sequestrated from nature, shut up within himself, and reduced to make himself a fanciful *non-ego* on the model of his personality. Hence arises the strange world in which infancy lives, in which primitive man lived. Man is only capable of communing with things by knowledge and love; without science he only loves so many chimeras. Science only can supply the foundation of reality necessary to life. If like Leibnitz we conceive the individual soul as a mirror in which the universe is reflected, it is by science that it will be able to reflect a smaller or greater portion of what is, and travel towards its final aim; namely, towards its perfect harmony with the universality of things.

To know is of all acts of life the least profane, for it is the most disinterested, the most independent of gratifications, the most *objective*, to employ the language of the schools. It is a waste of time to prove its sanctity, for those only for whom there is nothing sacred would dream of denying it. Those who go no further than the mere facts of human nature without venturing upon a qualification on the value of things, even those will not deny that science

at any rate is the first and foremost necessity of mankind. Man face to face with things is necessarily impelled to seek their secret. The problem suggests itself, and that by virtue of man's faculty of penetrating beyond the phenomenon he perceives. It is first of all nature itself which whets this craving to know, and he attacks the latter with the impatience bred of a naïve presumption, which fancies itself able to draw up a system of the universe at the first attempt and in a few pages. Then his curiosity is tempted by the wish to know all about himself, and much later on by the desire to solve the problem of his species, of humanity at large, of its history. Then comes the final problem, the great cause, the supreme law. The problem gets varied, grows larger and larger, according to the horizons appertaining to each age, but it never ceases suggesting itself; face to face with the unknown man always experiences a dual sentiment; a reverence for the mysterious, a noble recklessness that prompts him to rend the veil in order to know what is beyond it.

To remain indifferent face to face with the universe is utterly impossible to man. As soon as he begins to think, he begins to seek, he puts problems to himself and solves them; he must needs have a system on the world, on himself, on the primary cause, on his origin, on his end. He lacks the necessary data to answer the questions he puts to himself, but no matter. He supplies them himself. Hence, primitive religions, improvised solutions of a problem that required long centuries of research, but to which an immediate answer was necessary. The scientific method is capable of resigning itself to no-knowledge, or it does at any rate submit to delay; primitive science wanted there and then to grasp the meaning of things. In fact, to ask man to adjourn certain problems, to postpone to future centuries the knowledge of what he is, what kind of place he occupies in the world, what is the cause of the world and of himself, to ask him to do this

is to ask him to achieve the impossible. Even if he did get to know the enigma insoluble, one could not prevent him from worrying and wearing himself out about it.

I am aware that there is something irreverent, something unlawful, something savouring of high treason against the divine in this bold act of man by which he endeavours to penetrate the mystery of things. At any rate that is how all ancient peoples looked at it. According to them science was a robbery committed to the prejudice of God, an act of defiance and disobedience. In the beautiful myth with which the Pentateuch opens, it is the genius of evil that prompts man to emerge from his state of innocent ignorance in order to become like God by the knowledge distinct and antithetic of good and evil. The fable of Prometheus has no other meaning than that; the conquests of civilization presented as an attempt against, an illicit rape upon, a jealous divinity who wished to keep them to himself. Hence, the proud character of daring against the gods borne by the first inventors, hence, the theme developed in so many mythological legends: that the wish for a better state is the source of all evil in the world. It will be easily understood that, antiquity not having the "key-word" of the enigma, progress was, as it were, bound to feel a respectful dread in shattering the barriers erected, according to it by a superior power, that not daring to rely upon the future for a state of happiness, it conceived it as having existed in a primitive golden age (1), that it should have said, *Audax Iapeti genus*, that it called the conquest of the perfect a *vetitum nefas*. Humanity, in those days, had the sentiment of the obstacle, not that of victory, but though calling itself all the while audacious and daring, it kept marching onward and onward. As for us who have reached the grand moment of our consciousness, it is no longer a question of saying, "*Cœlum ipsum petimus stultitia!*" and to go on committing sacri-

leges as it were. We must proceed with proudly uplifted head and fearlessly towards that which is ours and when we do violence to things in order to drag their secret from them, feel perfectly convinced that we are acting for ourselves, for them and for God.

Man does not at once become fully conscious of his strength and creative power. Among primitive peoples, all the marvellous exploits of the human intellect are attributed to the Divinity; the wise men believe themselves inspired and thoroughly convinced of their mysterious relations with higher beings and boast of them. Often the supernatural agents themselves are credited with the authorship of works that seemingly exceed the powers of man. In Homer it is Hephæstos who creates all the ingenious mechanisms. The credulous centuries of mediævalism attribute all eminent science or all skill above the common level to secret faculties, to commerce with the Evil One. As a rule the non-reflecting or "little-reflecting" centuries are given to substitute theological for psychological explanations. It seems natural to believe that *grace* comes from on high; it is only later on discovered to emanate from the inmost conscience. The untutored fancies that the dew drops from the sky; he scarcely believes the *savant* who assures him that it emanates from the plants themselves.

When I wish to picture to myself fact as of the progenitor of science in all its primitive simplicity and disinterested impulse, I revert with a feeling of inexpressible charm to the first rational philosophers of Greece. To the psychologist there is a priceless ingenuousness and truth in this spontaneous ardour of a few men who without traditional precedent or official motive but from mere inward impulse of their nature take to grappling with the eternal problem in its true form. Aristotle is already a deep-thinking *savant* conscious of his process who produces science and philosophy as Virgil produces verse. Those first thinkers, on the contrary, are

moved by their spontaneous curiosity in a totally different manner. The object is before them, whetting their appetite; they attack it like the child who, growing impatient when confronted with a complicated piece of machinery, tries it in every way in order to get at its secret, and does not stop until he has found the to him sufficiently satisfactory explanation. This primitive science is nothing more than the constantly repeated "*Why?*" of infancy; with this difference though that with us the child finds an instructed person to supply the answer to his question while there it is the child itself who gives the answer with the same simplicity. It seems to me as difficult to understand the true point of view of science without having studied those primitive *savants* as to have the lofty sense of poetry without having studied primitive poesy.

A busy civilization like ours is by no means favourable to the glorifying of those speculative wants. Nowhere is curiosity more keen, more disinterested, more attracted by the outward than in the child and the savage. How sincerely and simply interested they are in nature, in animals, without a single second thought or a respect for humanity (2). The busy man, on the contrary, is bored in the company of nature and of animals; those disinterested enjoyments are no part or parcel of his egoism. Unsophisticated man, left to his own thought, often conceives a more complete and far-reaching system of things than he who has only received a conventional and fictitious education. The habits of practical life weaken the instinct of pure curiosity; but there is comfort to the lover of science in the thought that nothing can destroy it, that the monument to which he has added a stone is eternal, that like morality, it has its guarantee in the very instincts of human nature.

As a rule science is only looked at from the standpoint of its practical results and its civilizing effects. There is no great difficulty in finding out that modern

society is indebted to it for its principal improvements. This is very true, but nevertheless, putting the thesis in a dangerous way. One might just as well, in order to establish the claims of morality point exclusively to the benefits society derives from it. Science, as well as morality is valuable in itself and independently of all beneficent results.

These results are, moreover, nearly always conceived in a mean and shabby spirit. As a rule people remain blind to anything but practical applications which no doubt have their importance inasmuch as by their rebound they powerfully contribute to mental progress but which in themselves have little or no ideal value. Moral applications, in fact, almost always lead science astray from its true aim. To study history for no other purpose than the lessons of morality or practical wisdom to be deduced from it is simply to revive the ridiculous theory of those poor interpreters of Aristotle who considered the only object of dramatic art to be the cure of the passions it puts into action. The spirit against which I am especially tilting here is that of English science, so lacking in loftiness, in philosophy. I know of no Englishman, Byron perhaps excepted, who has deeply grasped the philosophy of things. To order one's life in accordance with reason, to avoid error, not to embark upon enterprises that cannot be carried out, to provide for one's self a gentle and assured existence, to recognize the simplicity of the laws of the universe, to get hold of a few views of natural theology seems to be to the Englishman who thinks the sovereign aim of science. There is never as much as an idea of lofty and harassing speculation, never a deep glance at that which is. This, no doubt, arises from the fact, that with our neighbours, positive religion, kept under a conservative sequestration, is held to be unassailable, is still considered as capable of giving the key to the enigma of great things (3). But science, in fact, being only of value in as far as it is capable of

replacing religion, what becomes of it under such a system? A kind of petty process to knock a little bit of understanding into folk, a kind of help in obtaining a social status, a means of acquiring useful and interesting knowledge. All this is not worth a moment's consideration. As for myself, I only admit of one result of science, namely, the solution of the enigma, the final explanation to mankind of the meaning of things, the explanation of man to himself, the giving to him in the name of the sole legitimate authority which is the whole of human nature itself, of the creed which religion gave him ready made and which he can no longer accept. To live without a system whereby to explain things is not to live the life of man. I certainly understand scepticism, it is a system that may be as good as any other; it has its grandeur and noble qualities. I understand faith, I envy its possessors and regret perhaps not possessing it myself. But what seems to me most monstrous in humanity is indifference and flippancy. As intelligent as you please, he who face to face with the infinite fails to perceive that he is surrounded by problems and mysteries is to me nothing better than an imbecile.

It has become a hackneyed truth by now to say that the world is governed by ideas. Still, it is after all but saying what ought to be and what will be rather than what has been. There is no gainsaying that in history we should make large allowances for force, for whim, and even for what is called accident, that is to say, to that, the moral cause of which is not proportionate to the effect (4). Philosophy, pure and simple, scarcely had any immediate influence on human progress until the eighteenth century, and it would be much nearer the mark to assert that it is the historical period which creates the philosophy than that the philosophy creates the period. But what admits of no doubt is that humanity amidst its oscillations ever tends to a condition of greater perfection, that it has the right and the power to

make reason more and more predominant over whim and instinct in the government of things. It is of no use arguing with him who has not recognized by now that history is not merely so much aimless agitation, a movement without a result. One will never succeed in proving the onward course of humanity to him who has not managed to find it out for himself. The first word of the creed of the nineteenth century is contained in the immense results achieved by the science of humanity during the last hundred years. Above the individual stands collective humanity which lives and develops like every other organic being and which like every organic being tends towards perfection, that is, to the plenitude of its being (5). After having groped for many long centuries in the darkness of infancy without consciousness of itself and by the mere motive power of its organism, the grand moment came when, like the individual, it took possession of itself, as it were, when it became aware of its own strength, when it felt itself to be a living unity; a moment for ever to be remembered, a moment we do not see because it is too near to us, but which, it seems to me, will be considered by future generations as a revolution comparable to that which has marked a new era in the history of all the nations. Barely half a century has elapsed since humanity began to understand and reflect upon, itself; and still we profess to be surprised at the consciousness of its unity and mutual adherence being so weak (6). The French Revolution is the first attempt of humanity to take the reins in its own hands and to drive itself. It is the advent of the power of reflection in the government of humanity. It is the moment corresponding to that in which the child hitherto led by spontaneous instinct, by mere whim, by the will of others, takes up his stand as a free, moral being, responsible for his acts. All that went before may be called in the words of Robert Owen "the irrational period of human existence;" and one day this period will only

count in the history of humanity and in that of our nation in particular as a curious preface, something like that chapter on the history of the Gauls which generally precedes the history of France. The real history of France begins at 1789, all that goes before is but the slow preparation of '89 and is of no interest except as viewed in that light. In fact, study history as you may you will find nothing analogous to that immense fact presented by the whole of the eighteenth century; of philosophers, men of wit in no way concerned with actual politics, radically changing the whole of previously received ideas and carrying the greatest of all revolutions, conscientiously, and with deliberation on the faith of their systems. The revolution of '89 is a revolution wrought by philosophers. Condorcet, Mirabeau, Robespierre are the first instances of theorists meddling with the direction of affairs and endeavouring to govern humanity in a reasonable and scientific manner. All the members of the Constituent Assembly, of the Legislative Assembly and the Convention were literally and almost without exception disciples of Voltaire and Rousseau. I will show by and bye how this chariot driven by such hands could not be driven so well at first as it was when it rolled along by itself and how it was almost bound to be shattered to pieces in an abyss. For the present it is sufficient to note the matchless audacity, the marvellous and bold attempt to reform the world according to the dictates of common sense, to attack everything savouring of prejudice, the blind established thing, habits to all appearances irrational, in order to replace them by a system calculated like a formula, combined like an artificial machine (7). This, I repeat, is a thing unique and without example in all the preceding centuries, nay, it constitutes in itself an age in the history of humanity. Surely, an attempt such could not be without blemish in every respect. Because those institutions that seem so absurd are not altogether so absurd as they seem, those prejudices have

their sensible side which you fail to see. The principle involved in all this admits of no controversy, intelligence alone must reign, intelligence alone; in other words, sense must govern the world. But are you sure that your analysis is complete, that you are not led into denying what you do not understand and that a more advanced philosophy will not succeed in justifying the spontaneous work of humanity? There is nothing easier than to show that the majority of prejudices on which the old society was based; the privileges of the nobility, the law of primogeniture, legitimacy, etc., are irrational and absurd from the point of view of abstract reason, that in a society constituted regularly such superstitions would find no abiding place. There is an analytical and seductive clearness about this such as the eighteenth century loved. But is that a reason to blame absolutely these abuses in the old structure of humanity in which they enter as an integral part? It is certain that the criticism of those first reformers was on many points harsh, that it showed the non-intelligent side of spontaneity, the arrogant pride of the easy discoveries of analytical reason.

As a rule the philosophy of the eighteenth century and the policy of the first Revolution show the errors inseparable from crude reflexion, the non-intelligent side of mere mother-wit, the tendency to consider as absurd that of which one fails to see the immediate reason. That century only understood itself and judged all the others by its own. Dominated by the idea of the inventive power of man, it extended too much the sphere of deliberate invention. In poetry it substituted artificial composition for the innate inspiration that wells up from the recesses of the heart without troubling about literary composition. In politics man was supposed to create freely and deliberately society and the authority that rules it. In morality man found and established the principle of duty as a useful invention. In psychology he seemed to be the creator of

the results most necessary to his constitution. In philology the grammarians of the period spent their time in showing the inconsistency, the errors of speech such as the people had made it and in correcting the deviations that had become habit by logical argument without perceiving that the terms which they want to suppress are as a rule more logical, clearer and easier than those they want to substitute for them. That century did not understand nature, spontaneous activity. No doubt man produces, in a certain sense, all that comes out of his nature. He spends all his active energy upon it, he supplies the brute strength which brings about the result, but the directing of all this does not belong to him. He supplies the material, the shape of it comes to him from on high; the real author is that living and truly divine force, secreted as it were by the human faculty, which is neither convention, nor calculation, but which produces its effect out of its own self and by its own tension. Hence arises the tendency towards the artificial, towards the merely mechanical with which we are still so deeply smitten. We fancy that we shall be able to foresee all possible cases, but the work is so complex as to set all our efforts at naught. The holy horror of the arbitrary is carried so far as to become destructive of all initiative. The individual is so swaddled round with rules and regulations, cramping his every limb that a lay-figure could do as much as he if we fashioned it to move to the turning of a handle. The difference between mediocrity and distinction in the individual has in that way become almost insignificant, administration has become a soulless machine which will accomplish the work of a man. France is too apt to believe that one may supply the private impulse of the soul by mechanism and extraneous process. Nay, there have been attempts to apply this detestable spirit to even more delicate things, to education, to morality (8). Have not we seen

ministers of public instruction who pretended to turn out great men by means of suitable regulations? Did not they conceive a process of making man moral as one makes fruit ripe by squeezing it between one's fingers? Ye of little faith in nature, why not leave it to the sun?

Such then are the excusable and necessary errors of centuries in which reflection takes the place of spontaneity (9). And although this first degree of consciousness is an immense progress, the condition resulting from it may have seemed in some of its aspects inferior to that which went before, and the enemies of humanity have been enabled to take advantage of it by combating the dogma of progress with some show of plausibility (10). In fact during the blind and irrational state, affairs proceeded spontaneously and by themselves by virtue of established order. The world had institutions made of one piece, the origin of which was never questioned, dogmas that were accepted without criticism. The world was a huge machine organized so long ago and with so little thought that people believed it had been put together by God Himself. Such was no longer the case the moment humanity wanted to govern itself and to underpin the instinctive structure of ages. Instead of old institutions whose origin was lost and which merely seemed the necessary result of the equilibrium of things, it had constitutions made by the hands of men, brand-new, with corrections and sentences struck out and from this very fact shorn of the old prestige. And seeing that it knew the authors of the new work, that mankind considered itself their equal in authority, that the improvised machine had visible defects, and that the whole of the business was henceforth transferred to a field open to discussion there was no reason why it should ever be declared closed again. The result was an era of upheaval and instability during which the dull but honest minded might well regret the old order of

things. One might just as well prefer the positive assertions of bygone science which was never at a loss to the prudent hesitations and fluctuations of modern science. No doubt, the uncontrolled reign of absolutism in politics as in philosophy is the one conducive to the greatest amount of rest and the *grands seigneurs* who are fond of rest are most likely to be fond of such a *régime*. Oscillation on the other hand is the necessary condition of true human development, and modern constitutions are perfectly consistent in laying down periodical terms for their further modification.

Hence it is not surprising that after the disappearance of the primitive state and the destruction of the old edifices built up by the blind conscience of ages, there should be some regrets, and that the new structures should be by no means equal to the old. Imperfect thought cannot reproduce at the first attempt the works of human nature, acting with all its innate forces. Combination is as powerless to reconstruct the works of instinct as art is powerless to imitate the blind work of the insect that spins its web or builds its honey-cells. Is that a reason to give up reflective science, to go back to blind instinct? Certainly not. It is a reason for continuing to inquire to the end, with the assurance that perfected thought will reproduce the same works but with a higher degree of clearness and reasoning. We must hope, march onward, and keep on marching always, despising meanwhile the objections of sceptics. Besides, the first step has been taken already, humanity has once for all begun the task of its emancipation, it has attained its majority, wishing to govern itself, and supposing even that advantage might be taken of a moment's sleep to impose fresh chains upon it, it will be mere child's play to break them. The only means to reconstitute the bygone condition of things would be to destroy its consciousness by destroying science and intellectual culture. There are people who know

this, but I pledge you my word that they will not succeed in doing it.

Such then is the condition of the human intelligence. It has overthrown gothic edifices, constructed one knows not well how, but which sufficed nevertheless to shelter humanity. Then it tried to rebuild the edifice on better proportions, without, however, succeeding; for the old temples raised by humanity had some wonderful subtleties of architecture and design which were not perceived at first and which the modern engineers with all their geometry cannot contrive to compass. Besides, the world has become more difficult to please and does not like to fatigue itself in sheer waste. The preceding centuries did not complain of the organization of society because there was no organization to speak of. The evil was accepted as emanating from fate. What would arouse an outcry nowadays did not provoke a murmur then. The neo-feudalistic school has taken a singularly unfair advantage of this misunderstanding. What are we to do? Reconstruct the old temple? That would be more difficult still, for even if its original plan were not lost, the materials could never be found again. What is wanted, is to look for the perfect beyond, to push science to its furthermost limits. Science and science alone is capable of restoring to humanity that without which it cannot live; a creed and a law.

The dogma which must be maintained at any cost is that the mission of intellect is the reforming of society according to its own principles; that it is by no means conspiring against Providence to attempt to improve its work by well considered efforts. True optimism can only be conceived under such conditions. Optimism would be a mistake if man were not susceptible of being made more perfect if it were not given to him to improve the established condition of things by science. The formula; "Everything is for the best," would without this be only a bitter mockery (11). Yes, everything is for the best

thanks to human intelligence capable of reforming the *necessary* imperfections of the first establishment of things. Let us rather say, "Everything will be for the best when man, having accomplished his legitimate task, shall have restored harmony in the moral world and conquered the physical world." As for bygone conceptions of Providence in which the world is conceived as made once for all, and bound to remain as it is, in which the effort of mankind against fate is considered as so much sacrilege, these conceptions are vanquished and obsolete. What is very certain, at any rate, is that they will not hinder man in his task of reformation, that he will persist *per fas et nefas* in correcting Creation; that he will pursue to the end his holy work, viz. to fight blind causes and the fortuitous establishment of things, *to substitute reason for necessity.* The religions of the East enjoin man to put up with evil; European religion is summed up in the few words; "Fight against the evil." This race is verily the offspring of Iapetus; it is bold against God.

The keen observer will notice that this is the kernel of the problem, that the whole of the struggle at this moment lies between the old and the new ideas of theism and morality. It is sufficient that he should see it. We have reached the sacred line where the doctrines divide; one point of divergence between two rays starting from the centre places the infinite between them. But this much should be remembered; that the theories of progress are irreconcilable with the ancient doctrine of divine justice, that their only meaning lies in attributing divine action to the human intellect, in one word, by admitting as the primordial power in the world the reforming power of *the spirit.*

The secret link of these doctrines is nowhere more apparent than in the last book of M. Guizot, a book of the greatest value and which will retain the privilege of being read by posterity, because it sets forth in a highly original manner a curious intellectual

moment. Will people five hundred years hence believe that one of the foremost minds of the nineteenth century could have said that since the emancipation of various classes of society the number of distinguished men has not increased in France, "as if Providence," he adds, "did not permit human laws to affect the intellectual order of things, with regard to the extent and magnificence of his gifts" (12). The Aristarchi of that time will consider this passage an interpolation and will advance peremptory proofs to that effect. They will say that so narrow-minded a conception of the government of the world could have never entered the mind of the author of "The History of Civilization." But how will they manage to excuse an argument like the following; "Up to this time society has always presented three types of social condition; men living on their income, men exploiting their income, men living by their work. Hence we may take this to be the natural condition of humanity, and thus it will ever be." Equally valid would the argument of antiquity have been; "Society has up till now always had three classes of men, an aristocracy, freedmen, slaves. Hence we may take this to be the natural condition of humanity, hence it will always be." It would have been just as reasonable to say in 1780, "Till now the State has always contained three classes of men, the governors, the aristocracy, limiting the power of the latter, the plebeians; hence we may take this to be the natural condition of humanity; hence, you who wish to change this condition of things are nothing better than a parcel of dangerous lunatics, of Utopians."

Assuredly no one is more profoundly convinced than I am of the impossibility of reforming human nature. But narrow-minded and dictatorial people have a strange way of interpreting human nature. To them human nature means that which they see of it existing in their own times and the preservation of which they ardently desire. There are a great many better reasons for maintaining that a privileged

aristocracy is essential to every society than for maintaining that a moneyed aristocracy is necessary to it. The truth is that human nature is only made up of instincts and very general principles which by no means sanction or sanctify one social condition in preference to another, but only certain conditions of the social fabric, such as for instance the family, individual property. The truth is that with the eternal principles of his nature at work, man can reform the political and social edifice; he can do this, seeing that undoubtedly he has already done it, seeing that there is no one who does not admit actual society to be better organized in certain respects than that of the past. "It is the result of religion;" people will say. Granted that it is, but what is religion if not the most beautiful and energetic creation of human nature? The appeal to human nature is the final argument in all social and philosophical questions. But we should be careful not to invoke this nature in a petty and narrow-minded manner with regard to the habits and customs, the order of things we are actually witnessing. It is a much deeper ocean, the bottom of which is not so easily reached, and which the weak-sighted cannot even perceive. How numerous are the ridiculous errors in commonplace psychology springing from neglect of this principle! They are nearly all due to the narrow ideas that prevail with regard to the revolutions already undergone by the moral and social system, to ignorance of the profound difference existing between the various literatures, and the feelings of various peoples.

Without altogether pinning his faith to one particular system of moral reform no lofty and penetrating mind will be able to deny that the very question of that reform is of kind different from that of political reform, the legitimacy of the latter being, I trust, beyond controversy. The social fabric like the political has been shaped under the influence of blind instinct. It is the mission of human intelligence

to correct it. It is not a bit more illegal to say that society may be improved than to wish the Shah of Persia to improve his government. The first time this terrible problem was assailed; to reform political society by human reasoning there was no doubt an outcry at the boldness of the thought, at the unheard-of attempt. The conservatives of '89 could oppose to the revolutionaries what the conservatives of 1849 opposed to the socialists. You attempt to do a thing which has no precedent, you are attacking the work of ages, you do not take into account history and human nature. The cheap bombast of the middle classes against the hereditary nobility; "You only had the trouble to be born, etc.," may with advantage be retorted against the moneyed classes. It is very patent that the existence of a nobility is not rational, that it is the result of the blind ordering of humanity. But if we are to argue in that way, where are we to stop? There is no great merit in twitting it with its want of rationality; it is simply an indefensible truism. I am even bound to admit that, all things considered, the attempt of the political reformers of '89 seems to me a great deal bolder in its aim and above all more wonderful than that of the social reformers of our days. Hence, I fail to understand how people who admit '89 can reject as a matter of right social reform. As for the means, I understand, I repeat, the most radical diversity. No general difficulties have been advanced against the socialists which may not be equally advanced against the constituents. It is a bold thing to assign limits to the reforming power of human reason and to reject no matter what attempt on the plea that it is without precedent. Every reform was characterized by the same defect originally, and besides, they who prefer that reproach do so nearly always because they have not a sufficiently extensive idea of the various forms of human society and of its history.

In the East thousands of people die of starvation or of wretchedness without ever having thought of

revolting against the established powers. In Europe, rather than die of hunger a man thinks it simpler to snatch up a rifle and to attack society, guided as he is by that profound and instinctive view that society has duties with regard to him which it has never fulfilled. We find at every page of our actual literature some remarkable turn, which is perhaps not thirty years old; it is merely a way of looking upon individual suffering as a social evil and making society responsible for the wretchedness and degrading condition of its members. A novel idea, a thoroughly novel idea, assuredly. We have ceased to consider those evils as emanating from fate (13). Well, we had better remember that humanity has never taken up a standpoint to relinquish it immediately afterwards.

Hence, by every way open to us we are beginning to proclaim the right of human reason to reform society by means of rational science, and the theoretical knowledge of existing things. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that science contains the future of humanity, that it alone can give us the explanation of its destiny and teach it the way to attain its object. Until now it is not human reason that has governed the world, but whim and passionate impulse. The day will come when reason enlightened by experience will resume its legitimate sway, the only one that can claim the title of "right divine," and will lead the world, no longer at haphazard, but with a clear perception of the goal to be reached. Our period of passionate impulse and error will then appear as so much pure barbarism, or as the capricious and fantastical age which in the child divides the charms of tender age from the rational existence of the mature man. Our mechanical politics, our blind and selfish parties will seem like so many monsters of another age. People will no longer understand how a century could have accorded the title of "able" to a man like Talleyrand, who looked upon the government of mankind as upon a mere game

of chess, without having an idea as to the object to be attained, without having as much as an idea of humanity itself. The science which will govern the world will not be politics. Politics, that is, the way to govern humanity like a machine will vanish as a special art as soon as humanity shall cease to be a machine. The master science, the then sovereign, will be philosophy, that is to say, the science which will investigate the aim and conditions of society. "In politics," says Herder, "man is a means, in morality, he is an end. The revolution of the future will be the triumph of morals over politics.

Hence, the *scientific organization of humanity* is the final word of modern science, that is, its bold, but legitimate pretension. I will go further still. The universal task of all that breathes being to *make God perfect*, that is, to further the grand final result which will close the circle of humanity by the unity of the whole, it admits of no question that *human reason* which until now has had no share in this work, the latter having been accomplished blindly and by the mere tendency of everything that is, it admits of no question, I repeat, that human reason will one day take in hand the management of this work and after having organized humanity will *organize God* (14). I do not insist upon this point and am willing that people should treat it as a mere illusion, because to many worthy minds which I wish to please, it would seem questionable form; besides, I do not require it in support of my thesis. I will confine myself to saying that nothing should astonish us, considering that the whole of the progress accomplished up to the present moment is perhaps no more than the first page of the preface of a work without end.

CHAPTER III.

PEOPLE may, if they like, consider the whole of the foregoing as absurd and chimerical, but I beg of them, in the name of Heaven, to grant me this, that science alone can supply mankind with those vital truths, without which life would be unbearable and society impossible. If we could conceive the possibility of arriving at those truths in any other way than by the patient study of things, higher science would have meaning no longer. We should have erudition, the curiosity of the amateur, but not science in the noblest acceptation of the term, and noble natures would assuredly forbear engaging in researches, having neither horizon nor future. Thus those who think that metaphysical speculation, pure reasoning, can, without the *agmatic* study of what is, supply us with the higher truths must necessarily despise that which to them is nothing more than useless lumber, an unnecessary and cumbersome burden to the intellect. Malebranche has not been too severe upon those *savants*, "who make their brain a storehouse in which they pile up without discernment everything that presents a certain character of learning, and who pride themselves on their likeness to those collections of curiosities and antiquities and which have neither a monetary nor an archæological value, and the price of which simply depends upon fancy, accident or passion." Those who think that matter of fact sense, common sense is a sufficiently efficient teacher to mankind must look upon

the *savant* in about the same way that Socrates looked upon the sophists; as useless and subtle disputators. Those who think that feeling and imagination, the spontaneous instincts of human nature can get at essential truths of life by a kind of intuition will be equally consistent in considering the researches of the *savant* as ponderous and of no use, or else as frivolous superfluities not having the merit even of being amusing. In short those who think that human reason cannot attain to the higher truths and that a superior power only has the mission of revealing these to them also contribute to the destruction of science by depriving it of what constitutes its life and its true value.

What, in fact, does there remain, if you deny science its philosophical aim? Trifling details, capable, no doubt, of whetting the curiosity of inquiring minds and of providing a pastime to those who have nothing better to do; very indifferent to those who look upon life as a serious matter and who above all, concern themselves with the moral and religious needs of man. Science is of value only in as far as it can investigate what revelation professes to teach. If you take away that which constitutes its worth you leave it only an insipid *residuum*, fit at best to fling to those who feel the want of a bone to gnaw. I sincerely congratulate the good souls that are content with this, as for myself I will have none of it. The moment a doctrine intercepts my horizon, I declare it to be false, the infinite only is to be my background. If you offer me a system ready-made, what then remains there for me to do? To verify by rational research what revelation teaches me? That would indeed be a useless exercise, a frittering away of time most frivolous, for if I know beforehand that what I have been taught is absolutely true there is no need of my tiring myself in looking for its demonstration. It is tantamount to wanting to observe the stars with the naked eye when one might use a telescope. It is tantamount to appeal-

ing to men when one may claim the authority of the Holy Spirit. I only know of one contradiction more flagrant than that; a constitutional pope.

I shall be told that there remains a vast field of inquiry in the natural truths which God has given for disputation by mankind. Vast you call it, when you take away God, man, mankind, the origins of the universe. I myself think it very narrow and at best fit for those who to their need of believing add the need of disputing. You think I ought to be very thankful for allowing me to exercise my mind on a few not clearly defined points by flinging to me the world as a bone of contention and by warning me distinctly that from the first word to the last I shall not understand a syllable. Science is not a dispute of a few otiose minds on a few questions left to them as food for their taste for controversy. Lives there the lofty mind that would devote his life to such humble and debasing labour? I feel reluctant to answer because to remove beforehand the objections that might be addressed to me here, would require long explanations and numerous reservations; profane science in any system of *frankly* admitted revelation can only be a *disputation* (15). That which is essential has been given; the only serious science will be that of commenting on the revealed word; no other will be of any value except in connection with this. Orthodox people have as a rule very little *scientific honesty*. They do not *investigate*, they try *to prove* and this must necessarily be so. The result has been given to them beforehand; this result is true, undoubtedly true. Science has no business with it, science which starts from doubt without knowing whither it is going, and gives itself up bound hand and foot to criticism which leads it wheresoever it lists. I know the theological method very well and may safely affirm that its process is opposed to the true scientific spirit. Heaven forbid I should deny that among the most sincere believers there have been men who have rendered

the most eminent services to science; and to go no further back than our contemporaries it is among the sincerest Catholics that I should perhaps find the men most sympathetic to my intellect and heart. But if I were allowed to come to a very close understanding with them, we should soon see how far their scientific ardour partakes of the character of a noble inconsistency. Let me be allowed to cite an instance in point. To my mind Silvestre de Sacy is the type of the orthodox *savant*. Undoubtedly, one could not possibly demand science of a higher standard as far as correctness and criticism of detail go. But if one looks higher, we have the strange fact of one of the most learned men of modern times never having arrived at a single idea of lofty criticism. When for critical or other purposes I am studying the man's works—an eminently respectable man, I am always tempted to ask him, "What is the good of it all? what is the use of knowing Hebrew, Arabic, Samaritan, Syriac, Chaldaic, Ethiopian, Persian, what is the good of being the foremost in Europe in the knowledge of the literatures of the East, if one has not grasped the idea of humanity, if the whole of all this has been conceived without a higher and religious aim." True higher science only commence when human reason conceives its task seriously, when it says to itself; "Everything else fails me; my salvation depends upon myself." It is only then that one resolutely sets to work; it is then that everything reassumes its value in view of a final result. We have done with playing at science, with making it a theme for insipid and pointless paradoxes (16); we are upon the great business of man and mankind; hence, there is begotten a seriousness, an attention, a respect unknown to those who only embarked upon science with but one part of themselves. One must not be too exacting; to work out one's salvation is the only thing needful, one will lend one's self to the rest as to a secondary matter, one will not be comfortable in it; if one's taste leans

too much that way one will reproach one's self for it as for a weakness, one will be only semi-profane, one will do like Saint Augustine and Alcuin who accuse themselves of being too fond of Virgil. They are not as guilty as they think they are. Human nature, in reality stronger than all the religious systems hits upon some secret modes of taking its revenge. Has not Islamism, by the most flagrant of contradictions nourished in its own bosom a development of purely rationalistic science? Kepler, Newton, Descartes and the majority of the founders of modern science were believers. Truly, a strange illusion, which proves at least the good faith of those who undertook that work, but more still the fate that impels the human intellect, entering the paths of rationalism, to an absolute breach, which at first it repels, with all positive religion. With some of those great men this was explained by the limited view they had of science and its aim; with others as with Descartes (17), whose pretension was really to deduce from reason the truths essential to mankind, there was a manifest superfetation, the use of two mechanisms to attain the same end. I beg the reader to remember that there is no need for me to take my stand here as a controversialist, to prove that science and revelation contradict one another; it is sufficient for me that there is double employment to prove my actual thesis. In a revealed system, science has only a very secondary value and does not deserve devoting one's life to it, because that which constitutes its worth is given elsewhere in a much more eminent manner. No one can serve two masters, nor worship a double ideal.

As for me, I say it with the candour which, I trust, the reader will not question (he who is not candid at twenty-five is a wretch) that I cannot conceive the higher science, the science understanding its aim and its end, except as outside all supernatural belief. It is the pure love of science that made me break the bonds of all revealed belief, and the day I declared

myself to be without any other master than human reason, I felt that I was laying down the conditions of science and philosophy. If on reading these lines some religious soul should fancy that I am insulting him, I should tell him; "No, I am your brother; I would insult nothing that belongs to the soul. It is because I am in earnest that I speak like this, it is because I look upon things religious in the most serious light." If like so many others I looked upon religion as merely a machine, a dyke, a useful prejudice, I should assume that indescribable semi-tone which in reality is only so much indifference and flippancy. But seeing that I believe in truth, the same that I believe Christianity to be a serious and important thing, there is a quasi-air of the controversialist about me and certain squeamish minds will I am certain raise the outcry about a recrudescence of Voltairianism. I am glad to have the opportunity of telling people once for all that if I import into religious discussion a frankness and heaviness of hand which are no longer the fashion, it is because I take it in sober earnest and with the deepest respect. You have no more dangerous enemy, gentlemen than those wary, half-hearted and merely insinuating critics. The least controversial age is after all the most incredulous and frivolous one. If, therefore, I am more candid and pointblank, it is because I am more deferential to, more anxious for *intrinsic truth.* Of course people will say that it argues a want of tact to take things in that way.

I shall often, in my life, have occasion to speak of Christianity. How could I do otherwise? The glory of Christianity lies in the fact of its engrossing still half of our earnest thoughts, of engrossing the attention of all thinkers, of those who struggle as well as of those who believe. I managed for a long while to write and to think as if there were no religions in the world, like so many rationalistic philosophers who have written volumes upon volumes

without broaching a word about Christianity. But this abstention seemed to me subsequently so irreverent towards history, so partial, so great a denial of all that is most sublime in human nature, that, at the risk of offending inquisitors and philosophers alike, I have made up my mind to take the human intellect as it is and not to deprive myself of the study of its more beautiful half. In my opinion religions are worth speaking about and there is as much philosophy in the study of them as in a few chapters of dry and insipid moral philosophy.

The day is not far distant when with a little candour on both sides and by the removal of misunderstandings that divide those best fit to understand one another, the world will be bound to admit that the lofty perception of things, higher criticism, deep love, truly divine art, and the sacred ideal of morality are impossible except on the condition of taking one's stand at the very outset in the divine; of declaring that everything which is pure, beautiful and lovable is equally sacred and worthy of worship, of considering everything that is as appertaining to one sole order of things which is nature itself, as the variety, the blossoming, the germination of a selfsame and living substratum.

Science really worthy of the name is therefore impossible except on the condition of most perfect autonomy. Criticism is no respecter of things; it neither stops at mystery or prestige, it breaks every charm, it pulls aside every veil. This power, utterly lacking in reverence casting an unflinching and scrutinizing glance on everything alike, is from its very essence guilty of high treason against the divine and the human. It is the sole authority without control; it is the spiritual man of Saint Paul "who judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." The cause of criticism is the cause of rationalism, and the cause of rationalism is the cause of the modern spirit itself. To curse rationalism is to curse the whole development of human intelligence from Petrarch

and Bocaccio, that is, from the first appearance of the critical spirit. It is crying back to the Middle Ages. No, it is not that, because even the Middle Ages had their bold attempts at rationalism. It is tantamount to proclaiming the uncontrolled sway of superstition and credulity. The real question at issue is to know whether we are to go back five centuries and to blame a development which was evidently called for by the necessity of things. And *à priori* and independently of all examination such a development carries its own legitimacy with it, for though the present century may not be infallibility itself, it is symbolic of the moment, and if there be an appeal against it, it must be an appeal to the future, not to the past. If, in fact, we study the march of modern criticism since Petrarch and Bocaccio we shall find it always following the line of its inflexible progress, overthrowing one after the other all the idols of incomplete science, all the superstitions of the past. First of all it is Aristotle, the god of mediæval philosophy who succumbs beneath the blows of the reformers of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries with their grotesque procession of Arabs and commentators; then comes the turn of Plato, who, set up for a little while against his rival, his doctrines preached like the gospel, recovers his dignity in dropping once more from the rank of prophet to that of man. After that it is the whole of antiquity which resumes its real significance and its importance—wrongly understood at first—in the history of human intellect; then comes Homer, the ideal of ancient philology, who one day was missing from his three thousand year old pedestal, and went to drown himself in the fathomless ocean of humanity; then comes the whole of primitive history, accepted up till then in its grossest literalness, which finds ingenious interpreters, rationalistic hierophants who lift the veil from before the old mysteries. Then come writings hitherto considered sacred and which tested by an ingenious and subtle exegesis become

a most curious literature. Would you know what the work of modern criticism is? Well, it is simply an admirable deciphering of a superstitious hieroglyph, it is the bold march from the letter to the spirit.

The modern spirit, then, means criticism, well-weighed intelligence. The belief in a revelation, in a supernatural order of things is the negation of criticism, it is the remains of the old anthropomorphic conception of the world, conceived at a time when man had not arrived at a clear perception of the laws of nature. When speaking of the supernatural we should say what Schleiermacher said of angels: "We cannot prove their impossibility. Nevertheless, the whole of this conception is such as to be impossible in our days, it belongs exclusively to the idea of the world as conceived by antiquity" (18). The belief in miracles, in fact, is the consequence of an intellectual view in which the world is considered as being governed by fantasy and not by immutable laws. No doubt, this is not the way in which the modern supernaturalist looks at it. Compelled by science which he dare not seriously offend to admit a stable order of things in nature he falls back upon the supposition that the free action of God may change now and then, and thus the miracle is conceived as a *deviation* from the established laws. But this conception, I repeat, was by no means that of primitive man. The miracle in those days was not considered as supernatural. The idea of the *supernatural* only appears when the idea of the laws of nature has been clearly formulated and makes its influence felt even upon those who timidly attempt to reconcile the marvellous and that which is proved by experiment. It is one of the half-hearted compromises between primitive ideas and the data of experiment which are neither poetical nor scientific. To primitive man the miracle was, on the contrary, perfectly natural and confronted him at each step in life, or to speak correctly, neither laws nor nature counted

for much with those naïve souls, perceiving everywhere the immediate action of free agents. The idea of the laws of nature only appears very much later on and only becomes accessible to cultivated intellects. It is completely wanting in the savage and even nowadays the simple minded admit the miracle without the smallest difficulty.

It is not from one argument only but from the whole of modern science that the tremendous result is derived. "There is no such thing as the supernatural." It is impossible to refute by direct arguments one who persists in believing in it; he will snap his fingers at every *à priori* argument; you might just as well argue with the savage on the absurdity of his fetishes. You cannot convert a believer in fetichism; the only means to bring him to a superior religion is not to preach it to him directly, for if he accepts it in that condition, he will only accept it as another kind of fetichism, but to civilize him, to raise him to the rung of the human ladder to which that religion corresponds. The orthodox supernaturalist is equally unassailable. No logical or metaphysical argument has the slightest effect on him. But by taking one's stand on a high level of the development of human nature supernaturalism appears only as a conception that has been left behind. The sole cure of this strange malady, which to the disgrace of civilization has not disappeared as yet from humanity, is modern culture. Raise the intellect to the level of science, nourish it according to the rational method, and without a struggle, without arguments those superannuated superstitions will drop away. Since the dawn of existence everything that has happened in the phenomenal world has been but the regular development of the laws relating to such existences, laws that constitute but one sole order of government which is nature. Whosoever speaks of anything as being above or beyond nature in the order of facts is guilty of contradiction, just as one would be in speaking

of the superdivine in the order of substances. It is simply a vain attempt to rise above the highest. All facts have for their stage space or mind. Nature is simply human reason, it is the immutable, the exclusion of everything savouring of the whimsical; and our modern task will not be accomplished until we have destroyed the belief in the supernatural, no matter in what shape—the same that we have destroyed the belief in magic, in witchcraft. All these belong to the same order of things. Posterity will look upon those who are fighting supernaturalism in our days as we look upon those who fought against the belief in magic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. No doubt, the latter rendered eminent service to human reason, but their very victories have consigned them to oblivion. It is the fate of all those who fight against prejudices to be forgotten the moment those prejudices disappear. Positive and experimental science only, by imbuing man with a strong sentiment of the reality of life, is capable of destroying supernaturalism. Metaphysical speculation is far from attaining that object. India shows us the curious phenomenon of perhaps the most powerful metaphysical development ever realized by the human mind side by side with the most exuberant mythology. Speculations of the Kantian and Schelling order have co-existed in the Brahmanic brain side by side with fables more extravagant than those sung by Ovid.

In endeavouring to account for the motives that caused me to cease to believe in the Christianity that held my childhood and early youth spellbound, it seems to me that the system of things, such as I understand it to-day only differs from my first conceptions in that I consider all the real facts as belonging to the same order and that I have restored to nature that which I formerly looked upon as superior to nature. One is bound to admit that there was something admirably powerful and lofty in primitive supernaturalism, in the supernaturalism

which created the mythologies of India and Greece (19). I willingly forgive that supernaturalism, nay regret it at times, but it is no longer possible; reflection has made too many strides, and imagination has cooled down too much to allow of such superb anti-common sense. As for the half-hearted compromise that seeks to reconcile an enfeebled supernaturalism with an intellectual condition incompatible with a belief in the supernatural, such a compromise only succeeds in outraging the most imperious scientific instincts of modern times without reviving the marvellous ancient poesy, henceforth and for ever impossible. Everything or nothing; absolute supernaturalism or unreserved rationalism.

Simple faith has its charms, but semi-criticism will never be anything but a burden to the spirit. The man who ponderously discusses fables shows himself as much of a simpleton and a gull though far less of a poet than he who accepts them "in a lump." We look upon the hagiologists of the seventeenth century who in writing the "Lives of the Saints" accepted certain miracles while rejecting others as too extravagant as upon so many barbarians —and not unjustly. It is very evident that with such principles they should have rejected everything, and from the artistic point of view we prefer for instance the "Sainte-Elisabeth" of M. de Montalembert where everything is unreservedly accepted. In that case the line between the belief in nothing and the belief in everything is very vague both as regards the author and the reader. One may lean towards the one or the other according to the mood being rationalistic or poetic, while the work itself preserves at least an indisputable value as a work of art. That also was the beautiful and poetic way of Plato, that is the secret of the matchless charm which the half-sceptical, half-believing use of popular myths imparts to his philosophy. But the acceptance of a part can only proceed from a narrow mind. Nothing can be less philosophical than to

apply semi-criticism to narratives conceived beyond all criticism.

Hence the task of modern criticism is to lay the axe to every system of belief tainted with supernaturalism. Islamism, which, by a strange fate scarcely constituted as a religion in its earlier years has since then marched onward constantly acquiring new degrees of strength and stability, Islamism, I say will perish without striking a blow by the sheer influence of European science, and history will point to our century as the one in which the first causes of that immense event began to appear on the horizon. The Turkish and Egyptian youth coming to our schools in search of European science will take back with them that which is its inseparable corollary, the rational method, the spirit of experiment, the sentiment of the real, the impossibility of belief in religious traditions evidently conceived beyond all sphere of criticism. Rigidly orthodox Musulmans are already growing uneasy at this and pointing out the danger to the emigrating younger generation. Sheikh Rifaa in the interesting narrative of his journey in Europe lays great stress on the deplorable errors that disfigure our books on science, such as for instance, the motion of the earth, etc.; and still deems it not utterly impossible to cleanse them of this poison. It is, however, patent that these heresies will shortly prove stronger than the Koran with minds initiated to modern methods. I fancy that there also will occur a Renaissance analogous to that of Europe in the fifteenth century, and which will be due, not to our *literature*, which has no more meaning to the Oriental than had the literature of the Greeks to the Arabs of the ninth and tenth centuries, but to our *science*, which, like that of the Greeks, having no stamp of nationality, is a pure work of the human intellect (20).

I am aware that man has weakling, humble, feminine instincts, a kind of yielding softness, if I may so term it, possessing wide-spread analogies at

which one guesses without wishing to define them and which are as much perhaps the concern of the physiologist as that of the psychologist (21), instincts that suffer from the manly and firm attitude of rationalism which sometimes looks like stiffness (22). In the life of individuals, as in that of humanity there is a kind of mediævalism, a movement in which reflection becomes veiled and obscured and in which instinct takes the upper hand for the time being. There are certain highly, delicately-strung souls to whom it will ever be impossible to submit to this severe system and austere discipline. Seeing that those instincts are part and parcel of human nature one should not blame them too much, and the true moral and intellectual system will assign their part to them; but that part must never be despondent depression or superstition. Great calamities by humiliating man and blunting the edge of his keenest and boldest faculties become in that way a downright danger to rationalism and inspire humanity, as illness inspires the individual with a certain tendency to submission, abasement and humiliation. A moisture-laden and enervating breeze, relaxing our rigidity, loosening that which held firm is wafted over us. One feels almost tempted to strike one's breast in atonement for the boldness felt while in good health, the mainsprings are weakened, generous and vigorous instincts drop, one feels a nameless inclination to become converted and to kneel down. If the calamities of the Middle Ages came back once more, the monasteries would become peopled again, the superstitions of the Middle Ages would return. The old beliefs have no resource left but ignorance and public calamities. Faith will always be in inverse ratio to vigour of mind and intellectual culture (23). It is there in the rear of humanity espying its weak moments to clasp it in its arms and to pretend afterwards that it is humanity which gave itself freely. As for ourselves we will not yield, we will hold out like Ajax against

the gods, if they count upon driving us back by striking us they are mistaken. Shame upon the timid ones that are afraid. Shame above all on those cowards who take advantage of our misery, who watch for the moment to conquer until misfortune has already half-conquered us.

The everlasting objection which keeps away from rationalism certain distinguished natures which from their very delicacy of disposition feel the most urgent need of belief, is the brevity of its creed, the contradiction of its systems, the appearance of negation, which imparts a look of scepticism to it. But scantily gifted in the matter of intellect and critical faculty they would like a ready made system uniting a great many suffrages and lending itself to acceptance without intrinsic examination. "How," say they, "can we put faith in those philosophers; no two speak in the same way" (24). All these objections are but the scruples of small minds, incapable of rational discussion and only too glad of the opportunity of stopping at those outward characteristics; scruples, deserving of respect nevertheless, for they are honest and imply faith in the truth. To reply to these good and noble souls that it is a pity it should be so, but that after all, rationalism is not to blame for the inability of man to affirm so few things, that it is better to affirm little with certainty than to affirm that of which one has no legitimate knowledge, that if the best intellectual system were that which affirms most, none would be preferable to primitive credulity which admits everything alike without criticism, to reply all this to these gushing and unsophisticated souls would be tantamount to arguing with an over excited appetite to prove that the craving it feels is a morbid one. One must reply only one thing and that one thing is the truth, namely, that the brevity of the creed of science is only so in appearance, that its contradictions are only contradictions in appearance, that its negative form is only so in appearance. Rational people con-

tradict one another because they do not treat of the same things, or because they treat the same things from a different point of view. It is certain that two men having had exactly the same education, having gone through the same studies in exactly the same manner would look at things exactly in the same way, though they might feel differently. No doubt science does not state its results like dogmatic theology, it does not count its propositions, it does not stop at a given number of its articles of belief. Its acquired truths are not ponderous theorems, ostentatiously "showing themselves off" for the benefit of the coarsest intellects. They are merely delicate perceptions, undefinable and even fugitive glimpses, ways of framing one's idea rather than positive data, ways of looking upon things absolutely undefinable; science is a culture of subtlety and delicacy rather than a positive dogma. But the true form of moral truths is, in reality, such that to apply to them those inflexible moulds of mathematical sciences which are only fit for truths of another order, and acquired by different processes is tantamount to warping their method. Plato has no symbol, no definite propositions, no fixed principles in the scholastic sense we attach to the word; to attempt to extract a dogmatic theory from him is tantamount to warping his idea. Still, Plato represents a *spirit;* Plato is a religion. A *spirit,* that is the thing essential. The spirit is everything, the positive dogma is little or nothing, and the chances are a thousand to one on its being contradictory; nay more, it must be fatally narrow, if it be not contradictory. A *spirit* does not express itself by an analytical theory, in which every point of science is successively elucidated. It is neither by *yes* nor by *no* that it solves the delicate problems it puts to itself. A *spirit* expresses itself in its entirety at one and the selfsame time, it shows itself in twenty pages as it would show itself in a book; in a book as it would show itself in a complete collection of works. There is not a single

dialogue of Plato which is not a philosophy in itself, a variation on the selfsame, ever identical theme. The word *Voltairien* expresses as clearly distinct and as easily understood a shade as the word *Cartesien;* nevertheless Descartes has a system and Voltaire has not. Descartes may be reduced to propositions, Voltaire cannot be so reduced. But Voltaire has a spirit, a way of taking things, the result of a whole *ensemble* of intellectual habits. Read through the whole of his works and then say if it is not sufficiently characteristic, whether the man has not deliberately and definitely chosen his vantage point to depict in his own way the grand landscape, whether the man had not a system of life, a manner exclusively his own of looking at things. When, oh when shall we cease to be ponderous schoolmen, insisting upon bits of phrases in geometrical fashion on God, on the soul, on morality. We will suppose those phrases to be as exact as possible, still they must be false, radically false by reason of their absurd attempts to *define*, to assign a limit to the infinite. I would sooner you read me a dialogue of Plato, a meditation of Lamartine, a page of Herder, a scene of "Faust." These if you like, contain a philosophy, that is, a way of looking at life and things. As for individual propositions each one arranges them according to his own tendencies, and this is the least important. But it worries small minds who only like formulas of two or three lines, easy to learn by rote. Then when they find that each philosopher has his own, and that all this is far from coinciding, they get grievously vexed in spirit and wondrously impatient. "It is the tower of Babel," they say, "each one speaks his own tongue. Let us go to those whose propositions stand better on their legs and to a creed settled once for all."

When I wish to initiate young minds to the science of philosophy, I begin by no matter what subject, I speak in a certain sense and in a certain tone; I care

little or nothing about their remembering the positive data I give them, I do not even attempt to prove them, but I insinuate a certain spirit, a way, a turn; then when I have inoculated them with this new sense, I leave them to search in their own way, to build their temple according to their own style. For there begins individual originality which we are bound to respect rigorously. The positive results of this order teach nothing, produce no effect, have no value if transmitted in that way and merely accepted by rote. One must have been led to them, one must have discovered them or guessed at them almost before they left the lips of him who propounded them. Positive propositions are every one's business; the spirit only can be transmitted. I frankly admit that I do not possess an *ensemble* of settled and clearly limited propositions constituting a natural religion, nor do I think that science possesses such. But there is an intellectual standpoint capable of being expressed in a book, not in a single phrase, which is in itself a religion; there is a lofty and religious way of taking things, and that way is my way. Those who have breathed—if only once in their lives—the air of the unseen world, and tasted of the ideal nectar, they will understand me (25).

It seems to me that it need not take long to find out that too great a precision in things moral is as unphilosophical as it is unpoetical. Every system is assailable by the very precision of it (26). How far removed, for instance, are those admirable funeral orations of Bossuet, in which he has commented upon death in such magnificent language, how far removed are they from that upon which our actual mode of feeling would insist by reason of the cramped and precise framework to which theology has reduced the ideas concerning the future life. Nowadays, we do not conceive an eloquent discourse over a tomb without a doubt expressed in it, without an attempt to draw the veil on what is beyond, with the mere expression of a hope, left in the clouds as it were, a

less eloquent standpoint perhaps, but certainly more poetical and philosophical than a too definite dogmatism, supplying if I may be permitted to say so, the map to the life to come. The savage of the Pacific looks upon his island as the whole of the world. Those who pretend to limit the lines of the infinite are still more foolhardy. That is why of all studies most brutalizing, most destructive of all poetry, theology is the first.

A system means an epic on things. It would be as absurd for a system to contain the last word on reality as it would be for an epic to attempt to exhaust the whole range of the beautiful. An epic is the more perfect in proportion as it corresponds best with the whole of humanity, nevertheless after the most perfect epic, the theme is still new and may lend itself to infinite variations according to the individual character of the poet, of the century or nation to which he belongs. How can one have a feeling for nature, how can one unrestrictedly inhale the perfume of things if one only sees them in the narrow and moulded forms of a system. I felt this divinely one day on entering a small wood. But an unseen hand repelled me as it were, because at that moment I pictured nature under I know not what physical aspect and I only became reconciled to the idea by saying to myself that all this was but a trait seized from the infinite, a vapour on a pure sky, a fluting on a vast curtain. We must dismiss the narrow conception of the schools, looking upon the human mind as a machine perfectly exact and adequate to the absolute. Views, glimpses, gleams of light, perceptions, sensations, colours, physiognomies, aspects, these are the forms under which the intellect perceives things (27). Geometry alone can be reduced to axioms and theorems. Elsewhere the vague is the true view.

The activity of human intelligence is such that to confine it in too narrow a circle is to force it into alienation. The right to think for one's self is

imprescriptible, if you bar vast horizons to man, he will resort to subtle arguments in revenge, if you impose a text upon him he will escape from it by using it in the wrong sense. The wrong sense or nonsense is the revenge of the human intellect in periods of authority on the fetters imposed on it; it is a protest against the text. This text is infallible, very well. But it lends itself to various interpretations, and there begins anew the diversity, the simulacrum of freedom with which one puts up, in default of another. Under the *régime* of Aristotle, as under that of the Bible people were permitted to think as freely as they are nowadays but on the condition of proving that such and such a thought was really in Aristotle or in the Bible, which was after all, not very difficult. The Talmud, the Masora, the Cabbala are curious proofs of the capability of the human intellect when fettered to a text. One begins to count its letters, its words, its syllables, the material sound gets to count far more than the sense, one goes on multiplying the exegetical subtleties, the modes of interpretation, like the starving wretch who, after having devoured his hunk of bread, carefully collects the crumbs thereof. All the commentaries on sacred writings are like one another, from those of Manu to those of the Bible, from those of the Bible to those of the Koran. All are a protest of the human intellect against the enslaving tendency of literal interpretation; a miserable attempt to fertilize a barren field. When the mind does not find an object commensurate with its activity, it is fain to create one by a thousand tricks.

That which the human intellect is apt to do before a text imposed, it does before a settled dogma. Why were people so terribly bored in the seventeenth century? Why did Madame de Maintenon die of *ennui* at Versailles? Alas! because there was no horizon. What resource is there left to the prisoner chained up opposite a dead wall of which he has counted the bricks over and over again? That is the very reason

why this century of orthodoxy and rule was the century of equivocation. It is the narrow rule that breeds equivocation. Why is law the science of equivocation? Because one is cribbed and confined on every side by formulas? Why was equivocation so universal in the Middle Ages? Because Aristotle was there. Why is theology from beginning to end nothing more than a long-drawn subtlety? Because the authority is ever present; one rubs shoulders with it constantly, its uncomfortable pressure is felt at every moment. It is a perpetual struggle between liberty and the divine text. A spout of water, left free uprises in a straight line, compressed, confined it swerves and deviates. Similarly the intellect left free operates normally, compressed it subtilizes.

I am convinced that if minds cultivated by the study of rational science were to interrogate themselves, they would find that, without formulating any proposition capable of being reduced to one sentence, they have sufficiently clear views on vital matters, and that these views variously expressed for every one come to about the selfsame thing; only they do not happen to be fixed into hard and fast forms and settled once for all. Hence springs the individual shade of all philosophies, and above all of German philosophies. Each system is merely the way in which an eminent mind has looked at the world, a way always deeply stamped with the individuality of the thinker. I do not doubt that each of these systems assumed the shape of a very great truth in the brain of its author, but the very fact of their individuality renders them incapable of being communicated and demonstrated (28). They are pure explanatory hypotheses, like those applied to physics, but which do not prevent the subsequent trial of others. We must not absolutely say that it is thus for we cannot have a conception adequate to primordial causes; all we can say is that things happen as if it were thus (29). It is impossible for two well ordered minds to look upon the same things and to

come to a different conclusion. If the one says, "Yes," and the other, "No," it is evident that they do not speak of the same thing or that they do not attach the same sense to the same words (30). That is what Hegel meant when he averred that every thinker is at liberty to create the world in his own fashion.

It is not surprising, then, that the orthodox man should be able to lock up his beliefs in a safer way than the philosopher. Orthodoxy puts, if I may be allowed to say so, the whole of its vital provision in a hard and resisting tube, which is an outward and palpable fact; revelation, a kind of carapace that protects, but at the same time, makes, it heavy and ungraceful. The faith of the philosopher, on the contrary is always nude, clad in nothing but its simple beauty. One may fancy the temptation it affords to brutal outrage. But the day will come when the stiletto of criticism will in its turn, pierce the carapace of the believer and reach the human nature within.

Truth, to the thinker, is only a more or less advanced but always incomplete form, or at any rate a form capable of being perfected. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, petrified, stereotyped in its forms, can never cast off its past. Seeing that it pretends to have been made at one sitting and in one piece it places itself beyond the pale of progress, it becomes rigid, overbearing, unbending, and while philosophy is always abreast with humanity, theology at a certain period lags behind. For it is immutable and humanity marches onward. Not that theology has not been forced to march now and then like the rest. But it denies this, it lies to history, it warps all criticism in order to prove that its actual state is its primitive one, and it is obliged to do this on the penalty of forfeiting the conditions of its existence. The philosopher on the contrary, conceives under no circumstances either absolute retrogression or predetermined immobility. He recommends concession

to the successive modifications brought about by time, without ever categorically severing one's self from the past any more than being its slave. He has no wish to deny that past, but endeavours to explain it in a new sense, to show the part of ill-defined truth it contained. There is nothing contradictory in a philosopher exceeding the limits of his own philosophy, in using several systems, by which I mean several not equally perfect expressions of the truth; this simply redounds to his honour.

The problem of philosophy is ever new, it will never attain a definite formula, and the day we shall be satisfied to abide by the assertions of the past by accepting them as so many absolute truths, incapable of reconstruction, that day will sound the death-knell of philosophy. The orthodox man is never more annoying than when, pluming himself upon his immobility, he twits the thinker with his fluctuations and philosophy with its constant modifications (31). It is exactly those very modifications which prove that philosophy is truth; through them it is in harmony with human nature, always in travail and happily condemned to obtain all its conquests in the sweat of its brow. Only that which is not progressive does not vary. There is nothing more motionless than the nonentity who has never lived the intellectual life, or the dullard who has never seen aught but one side of things. The way not to vary is not to think. If orthodoxy is immutable it is simply because it has placed itself beyond the pale of human nature and reason.

And I pray you not to say that this is scepticism. It is criticism, that is, the ultimate and transcendental discussion of what at first was admitted without sufficient inquiry, in order to deduce from it a purer and more advanced truth. It is high time that we should accustom ourselves to call sceptics all those who do not believe as yet in the religion of the modern spirit, and who still lingering around effete systems, deny with blind hatred the

acquired dogmas of the living century. We accept the inheritance of the three great modern movements; protestantism, philosophy and the revolution, without having the slightest inclination to become converts to the symbols of the sixteenth century, or Voltairians or to recommence another 1793 or 1848. There is not the slightest need for us to recommence what our fathers accomplished. Their work is summed up in liberalism, we shall know how to continue that work.

In logic, in morality, in politics man aspires to the attainment of something absolute. Those who base human knowledge, and duty and government on human nature appear to deprive themselves of such a foundation; for unhampered inquiry means dissent, variety of views. It seems easier, therefore, to seek for knowledge, morality and politics a basis outside man, a revelation, a right divine for instance. It is unfortunate that there exists nothing of the kind; that such a revelation would first of all have to be proved, that it is not proved, and that if it were proved, it could only be proved by reason, that consequently diversity would uprise again with regard to the appreciation of those proofs. Hence, it is better to remain within the field of human nature, to look for the absolute only in science and to do away with all those timid palliatives which only produce illusions and postpone the difficulty.

Nowadays there are only two systems confronting one another; one portion of humanity, despairing of reason, believing it to be condemned to eternal contradiction of itself, frantically embrace an outside authority and become believers through scepticism (a Jesuitical system; authority, the director, the pope substituted for reason, for God). The other portion from a more profound view of the march of human intellect perceive progress and unity beneath apparent contradictions. But let us remember this, for it is essential; unless one believes from instinct, like the most simple minded, one can only believe

from scepticism; to despair of philosophy has become the first basis of theology. I love and admire this grand despairing scepticism the expression of which has endowed modern literature with so many admirable works. But I can only laugh at and be disgusted with that petty irony of human nature which results in superstition and pretends to cure Byron by preaching the Pope to him.

A great deal is said nowadays about the accordance of human reason with faith, of science with revelation, and some pedants who wish to make themselves interesting and to pose as impartial and superior minds have made this a theme full of ambiguity and frivolous nonsense. The principal thing is to understand one another. If revelation be really what it pretends to be, the word of God, it is but too clear that it is master, that it has no need to enter into a pact with science, that the latter can only pack up its traps in presence of this infallible authority, and that its role (that of science) would be reduced to that of *serva et pedissequa*, to comment upon or to explain the revealed word. From that moment also the custodians of this revealed word will be superior to the investigators of human science, or rather they will be the only power before which the other will vanish, like the human before the divine. No doubt, truth not admitting of self-contradiction, one would be bound to conclude that *sound science* could not very well contradict revelation. But seeing that the latter is infallible and more clear, if science appears to contradict it, one will conclude that it is not *sound science* and impose silence on its objections. But if, on the contrary, the fact of the revelation is not real, or if at any rate, there is nothing supernatural about it, then religions are nothing more than human creations and the whole matter is reduced to the finding of the reason for the different fictions of the human intellect. On such an hypothesis man himself has done everything by means of his natural faculties, in one case spontaneously and in

the dark; in the other scientifically and reflectingly; but in sum man has done everything, he finds himself everywhere face to face with his own authority and with his own work. The theologians are right when they say that before everything one should discuss the fact; is this doctrine the word of God? And whether we reply yea or nay, the so-called problem of the agreement between faith and reason, supposing as it does two equal powers which it is necessary to reconcile, is utterly devoid of sense; for in the first case, reason vanishes in the presence of faith, like the finite before the infinite and the strictest orthodoxy has right on its side; in the second case there remains nothing but reason, manifesting itself in various ways, but nevertheless always remaining identical with itself (32).

It is you who are the sceptics, and we are the believers. We believe in the work of modern days, in its sanctity, in its future, it is you who curse it. We believe in reason and you insult it; we believe in humanity, in its godlike destinies, in its imperishable future, and you laugh at it; we believe in the dignity of man, in the goodness of his nature, in the rectitude of his heart, in his right to attain the perfect state, and you shake your head at these comforting truths and you complacently lay stress on the evil, and the most saintlike aspirations towards a divine idealism, you denounce them as the works of Satan, and you talk of rebellion, of sin, of punishment, of expiation, of humiliation, of penitence, of the hangman to him who should hear no words from your lips save those of deification and expansion. We believe in everything that is true, we love everything that is beautiful (33); and you, wilfully blind to the infinite charm of things, you pass through this beautiful world of ours without deigning to bestow a smile upon it. Is the world a cemetery and life a funeral procession? Instead of the reality you cherish an abstraction. Which of us denies, you or we? And he who denies is he not the sceptic?

Our rationalism, therefore, is not that *hauteur*, analytical, dry, negative, incapable of understanding the things of the heart and the imagination which was inaugurated by the eighteenth century; it is not the exclusive use of what has been called "the acid of reasoning;" it is not the *positive philosophy* of M. Auguste Comte, nor the irreligious criticism of M. Proudhon. It is the acknowledgment of human nature, hallowed in all its parts, it is the simultaneous and harmonious use of all the faculties, it is the exclusion of all exclusiveness. According to our views M. de Lamartine is a rationalist, still in a more restricted sense, he would no doubt deny this title, seeing that he himself tells us that he attains his results not by combination or reasoning but by instinct and direct intuition. Until now criticism has been conceived as being only a dissolving agent, an analysis destroying life; from a more advanced point of view it will be understood that higher criticism is only possible on the condition of giving the whole of human nature full play, and that reciprocally a higher love and a great admiration are only possible on condition of criticism. The pretended poetical natures who imagined they could get to the true sense of things without science will then turn out to be so many chimera-mongers, and the austere *savants* who shall have neglected the more delicate gifts whether from scientific virtue or from a compulsory contempt of what they did not possess will remind us of the ingenious myth of the daughters of Minyas who were changed into bats for having been unable to do anything but argue in the presence of symbols to which a more generous method of elucidation should have been applied.

History appears to raise an objection against science, criticism, rationalism, civilization—synonymous terms after all—which it is expedient to explain. It seems in fact to show us the most cultured people always a prey to the most barbarous people; Athens to Macedonia, Greece to the Romans,

the Romans to the barbarians, the Chinese to the Manchoos. The process of thinking is a wearing one. Our middle class families which in reality have only been conscious of their own strength for one or two generations are already wearing out. The half-century that has elapsed since 1789 has exhausted them to a greater extent than the innumerable generations of primitive darkness. Too much knowledge apparently weakens humanity, a people of philologists, thinkers and critics would probably be too weak to defend its own civilization. The Germany of the beginning of the century gave way disgracefully to France and yet how superior from a mental point of view was the Germany of Goethe and Kant to the France of Napoleon. Barbarism being unconscious of its own powers, is obedient and passive; the individual, unaware of his individual worth is lost in the masses, and obeys the command as he would fate. Passive obedience is only possible on the condition of stupidity. The man who thinks for himself, on the other hand, calculates his interests too well and asks himself with that feeling of positiveness which he applies to all things whether it is really his interest to get himself killed. Besides, he clings more tenaciously to life and the reason is plain enough. His individualism is much stronger than that of the barbarian, civilized man says *I* with unparalleled energy; with the barbarian on the contrary, life is scarcely raised one degree above the level of the dull sensation that constitutes the life of the animal. He does not resist, for the reason that he barely exists. Hence the contempt for human life (for his own as well as that of others) which is the secret of the barbarian's heroism. The cultivated man whose life has a real value, sets too much store by it to stake it casually (34). Brutal strength appears to him such an extravagant idea that he revolts against such absurd means and cannot make up his mind to pit himself against weapons which a savage handles better than he does. In those rude

struggles the most benighted conscience is the best; personality, reflection are simply so many causes of inferiority. Hence, the liberty to think for one's self has up till now been by no means favourable to enterprises requiring the abdication of their individuality by masses of men in order to yoke themselves to the vehicle of a grand idea and to drag it majestically through the world. What would Napoleon have done with an army of reasoners?

This is a real contradiction which like so many others, cannot be cyphered away except by acknowledging that humanity is as yet far removed from its normal condition. While one portion of humanity is still leading a brutal life, misunderstanding and evil passions will succeed in exploiting barbarian humanity against civilized humanity and in letting loose the ferocious brute on reasonable men. The critics are right, whether they are the stronger or the weaker does not prevent them from being in the right, and if they fall, it simply proves that the actual condition of humanity is still far distant from the point when justice and reason will be the only real forces as they are the only legitimate ones.

Bear in mind, I pray you, that this is not a mere academic question, a dream discussed in an idle hour. It is the question of humanity itself and the legitimacy of its nature. If humanity is so constituted as to require necessary illusions, if too much refinement leads to dissolution and weakness, if too great a knowledge of the reality of things becomes injurious to it, if it wants superstitions and incomplete views, if the legitimate and necessary development of its own being prove its own degradation, then humanity is badly constituted, it is based on false foundations, it is only travelling towards its own destruction, because those who have conquered thanks to their illusions will be forcibly brought to their own disillusion afterwards by civilization and rationalism. Under such circumstances our symbol is destroyed, for our symbol is the legitimacy of pro-

gress. And on this hypothesis, humanity would find itself in a blind alley, its line of route would not be the straight one, proceeding towards the infinite, seeing that pushing forward and forward it would discover in the end that it had gone backward. The law, which in such a case one would have to enjoin on human nature would no longer be to exert all its strength in the attainment of the absolute, civilization would have its *maximum*, arrived at by an equilibrium of opposites, and wisdom would consist in stopping at that. The question, in one word, comes to this; the law of humanity is either an expression such that by increasing all its variable quantities, one increases the total value; or else it must be assimilated to those expressions that attain a *maximum*, beyond which any addition brought to the several factors results in a decrease of the total value.

Happy will they be who by means of a definite experiment will be enabled to oppose a proved answer to these terrible apprehensions. Our affirmations in that respect may perhaps possess some of the merit of faith which believes without having seen, and truth to tell, when one looks at isolated facts, optimism appears a very gratuitous liberality to God. As for myself, if I were to see humanity collapse on its own foundations, mankind slaughter one another in some fateful darkness, if I were to see all this, I should still go on proclaiming the rectitude of human nature, that perfection is its final aim, that misunderstandings will disappear, and that the day must come when reason and perfection shall reign supreme. Then we shall be remembered, and some will say; "Oh, how they must have suffered." We must take care not to assimilate our civilization and our rationalism to the fictitious culture of antiquity and above all to that of degenerate Greece. Our eighteenth century was no doubt an epoch of moral depression, nevertheless it closed with the greatest eruption of devotion, of abnegation of life recorded in history. Those philosophers, those Girondists who so proudly

marched to the scaffold were they nothing more than quaking rhetoricians? Was it a superstitious illusion that strengthened those noble souls? There exists, I know, a generation of egotists, a generation that has grown up in the shadow of a prolonged peace, a sceptical generation, born under the star of Mercury, without faith or love, which at the first blush, seems to be governing the world. But even if this were so, we should not despair of humanity, without a doubt, for humanity does not die, but we should have to despair of France. But, after all, are these the men whom in good faith, we ought to oppose as an objection to science and philosophy? Is it too much knowledge that has taken the muscle and marrow out of them? Is it too much thought that has destroyed all feeling of patriotism and honour in them? Is it their too frequent excursions to the realms of the intellect that have made them unfit for great things? They whose minds are closed to every idea, whose only science is that of a fictitious world, whose philosophy consists of frivolity. For Heaven's sake, do not talk to me of these men when we are discussing philosophy and civilization. Even if it be proved that the tone of the society which became more and more powerful under Louis-Philippe was calculated to hamstring all noble effort, it would be no argument against the society which will be brought to the front by reason and human nature in its frankest and truest development. Even if the final impotency of the official world were proved, if it were proved incapable of creating aught original and strong, it would not justify us in despairing of humanity, for humanity disposes of unknown sources whither it goes constantly to renew its youth. Is it too much rationalism that has ruined unhappy Italy, which at the present moment presents to us the deplorable spectacle of a member of humanity stricken with paralysis? Is it too much criticism that has dried up the vessels that gave it life? Was it not stronger and more beautiful in the fifteenth, and in the first half of the sixteenth, cen-

turies, when it was the pioneer of the whole of Europe along the roads of civilization, and spread its sheltering wings over the boldest of rationalism? Is it its religious beliefs that have preserved its vigour? Was not the pagan Italy of Julius II. and Leo X. worth the exclusively Catholic Italy of Pius V. and the Council of Trent? To knock down the Capitol or the Temple of Jupiter Stator would have been tantamount to overthrow Rome. Such things should no longer be possible among modern nations, seeing that the rest and be thankful in the matter of religious creeds is sufficient to enervate a nation (35). A few months ago the people of Rome cast their church bells into the melting pot to make coppers of them. No doubt if the religion of the moderns were like that of the ancients, the spinal marrow of the nation itself, this would have been a great piece of absurdity. One might as well profess to enrich France by converting the Vendôme Column into money. But what are people to do when the gods are departed? Symmachus asking for the restoration of the altar dedicated to Victory was simply playing the rhetorician.*

Seeing that antiquity never understood the great object of literary culture, having always looked upon it as a kind of mental drill with a view to "speaking well," it is not very surprising that the strong and energetic natures of those days should have so severely condemned the puerile system of the rhetoricians and the meretricious and sophistical education they imparted to the young. The ideal of virtue as conceived by serious minded men was the rough and uncultivated character and their ideal of a society consisted in a development exclusively tending to devotion to the country and *well-doing* (Sparta, ancient Rome, etc.). And seeing that literary culture was found to be subversive of such a state, that culture was denounced as offering the greater facility to the

* Symmachus, Prefect of Rome 384 of the Christian Era, Consul in 391, reported to be the last adherent and advocate of Paganism in the West.—TRANSL.

enemy to vanquish. Hence those commonplaces about the superiority of *well-doing* over *eloquent talking*, of rough hewn virtue over refined civilization, the contempt of the *Græculus*, primed with grammar, etc. In our days all this would be so much nonsense. From our point of view, Sparta and ancient Rome represent, in fact, one of the most imperfect conditions of humanity, seeing that one of the essential elements of our nature, thought, intellectual perfection was utterly neglected there. No doubt the simple and genuine cultivation of the love of country is superior to that artificial culture of the latter days of the empire, and if anything could inspire one with fear for the future of modern civilization it would be the fact that the so-called classical education given to our young generation resembles that of that lamentable epoch. But there is nothing superior to science and to the grand and purely human civilization, and it is only the superficial mind that could compare this grand form of complete life to the artificial centuries in which a man could have no noble sentiment apart from a rhetorical reminiscence, when he sent for a philosopher to hear the reading of a *Consolation* when he had lost his nearest and dearest, and when people on their death-beds pulled from their pockets a speech prepared for the occasion.

Thus, if civilization were to founder once more in presence of barbarism, it could not be argued as an objection against it. It would have right on its side even beyond that. It would once more vanquish its conquerors, and so it will be always until the day when there will be no longer any one to conquer, and when sole mistress it will reign in its own right. What does it matter by whom the work of civilization and the welfare of humanity be accomplished? In the eyes of God and posterity, Russians and French are only so many human beings. We only appeal to the principle of nationality when the nation oppressed is superior intellectually to that which oppresses her. The absolute partisans of nationality

can only be narrow-minded people. Humanitarian perfection is the aim, and from that point of view civilization is always triumphant; and it would be strange indeed if an invisible weight dragged down humanity in that sense, if that sense meant only degeneration.

From the point of view of humanity there is no such thing as decline. Decline is a word that ought to be banished once for all from the philosophy of history. Where does the decline of Rome begin? The narrow-minded, ever concerned with the preservation of ancient habits and customs will aver that it is after the Punic wars, that is, just at the very moment when the preliminaries having been laid down, Rome begins her mission and gets rid of the habits of her infancy, which henceforth have become impossible to her. Those who are preoccupied with the idea of the republic will place the fatal line at the battle of Actium; they are the poor folk who would have committed suicide in company with Brutus; they fancy they can see death in what was after all but the crisis of ripe age. Can that decline be placed with greater justice in the fourth century, when the work of Roman assimilation is at its height, or in the fifth, when Rome imposes her civilization on the barbarians that invade her? And when we look at Greece from the Homeric times to the days of Heraclius, where is her decline? Is it at the epoch of Philip, when she is on the eve of making her brilliant first appearance in the work of humanisation through Alexander? Is it during the domination of Rome, when she becomes the cradle of Christianity? So true is it that the word decline has no sense except from the narrow point of view of politics and nationalities, not from the grand and wide point of view of the work of humanisation. When atrophy takes hold of certain races, humanity has always a sufficient reserve of living forces left to make good such deficiencies. And if it be apprehended that humanity having exhausted all its reserve stock be

one day in the position of each nation in particular, my answer must be that before then humanity will no doubt have become stronger than all the destructive causes put together. In our actual condition, criticism carried to extremes causes moral and physical weakness, in the normal condition science will become the mother of strength. Seeing that hitherto science has only appeared in the guise of criticism, it is difficult to conceive its ever becoming a powerful active motor. Such will be the case, nevertheless, the moment it has succeeded in creating in the moral world a conviction equal to that produced of yore by religious faith. All the arguments deduced from the past in order to prove the impotence of philosophy are no proofs at all with regard to the future, for the past has only been a necessary introduction to the grand era. Reflection has as yet not shown itself as a creative power. Let us wait a while, let us wait a while. . . .

Many of my readers will no doubt be surprised at my frequent appeals to the future. It is because I am really convinced that the majority of the arguments advanced apologetically in behalf of science and modern civilization are very faulty and lay themselves open to the attacks of the retrogressive schools if they, the arguments, are to be considered by themselves and irrespective of the ulterior condition of things to which they will have contributed. The only means of understanding and justifying the modern spirit is to look upon it as a necessary stage towards the perfect, in other words, towards the future. And this appeal is not the mere act of blind faith which falls back upon the unknown. It is the legitimate result emanating from the whole of the history of the human intellect. "Hope," says George Sand, "is the faith of this century."

Side by side with theological dogmatism which makes science useless and robs it of its dignity we must place another dogmatism, still more narrow and more absolute, that of superficial common sense,

which in reality is only so much self-sufficiency and emptiness, and which not perceiving the difficulties of problems, thinks it strange that their solution should be looked for outside the beaten track. It is too evident that the common sense in question is not that resulting from straightforward action of the human faculties on a sufficiently well-known subject. The one I am tilting against is a somewhat rather equivocal quality the exclusive possession of which small minds claim for themselves and which they liberally grant to those who agree with them, the subtle triviality which succeeds in investing everything with an appearance of evidence. Now, it is very evident that common sense, thus understood, cannot make up for science in its search for truth. First of all, let us remember that the superficial minds who are constantly appealing to common sense designate by that name the very special and very limited form of customs and habits under which they happen to have been born. Their common sense is the way of looking at things of their century or of their province. Only he who has systematically compared the various facets of humanity would have the right to make this appeal to universal opinions. Besides is it common sense which will give me philosophical, historical, philological knowledge, all of which are necessary for the criticism of the most important truths? Common sense has every right to speak when it comes to establishing the bases of morality and psychology, seeing that in that case it is only necessary to note that which appertains to human nature, which should only be looked for in its general, consequently in its most commonplace expression; but common sense is only ponderous and clumsy when it pretends to solve by itself problems, to the elucidation of which divination is more essential than sight, in connection with which one has to catch a thousand shades almost imperceptible, to pursue hidden and secret analogies. Common sense is partial; it always looks at its opinion from the

inside, it never emerges from it to judge it from the outside. It so happens, however, that nearly every opinion is true in itself, but only relatively true with regard to the point of view whence it is conceived. The really true in moral and historical sciences appeals to subtle and refined intellects only, the same that mathematics appeal to the systematic intellect only. The truths of criticism do not lie on its surface, they almost look like paradoxes, they do not plant themselves, visible from all sides before the ordinary understanding like theorems of geometry, they are fugitive flashes of which the eye just catches a glimpse, which one perceives in an absolutely individual way, and which it becomes almost impossible to communicate to others. The only resource left is to bring the other minds to the same point of view in order to show them things from the same side. What business has this vulgar common sense, with its blustering ways, loud voice and self-satisfied laughter in that world of *finesse* and subtle thought? *I can make neither head nor tail of it* is its last and sovereign sentence, and how very easy indeed is it to say that much. The self-sufficient tone it assumes when face to face with the results of science and thought is one of the most aggravating nuisances the thinker has to contend with. It unhinges him, and if he be not a philosopher at heart, he cannot help getting annoyed with those who abuse their privilege in that way against his delicate and feeble voice.

Hence it is inadmissible to appeal from science to common sense, seeing that science is only enlightened common sense operating knowingly. The really true is no doubt the voice of human nature, but of nature fittingly developed and brought by culture to its utmost capacity.

CHAPTER IV.

SCIENCE has no enemies save those who consider truth as useless and making no difference, and those who granting to truth its priceless value profess to get at it by other roads than those of criticism and rational investigation. The latter are, no doubt to be pitied as having strayed from the right method of the human intellect, but they at any rate recognize the ideal aim of life; they may come to an understanding and to a certain extent sympathize with the man of science. As for those who despise science as they despise lofty poetry, as they despise virtue, because their degraded soul only understands the perishable, we have nothing to say to them. They belong to another world, they do not deserve the name of men, seeing that they are without the faculty which constitutes the noble prerogative of humanity. We are rather proud that they should look upon us as men of another age, as fools and dreamers, we glory in knowing the routine of life less well than they do, we delight in proclaiming our studies to be *useless;* their contempt for them makes them valuable to us. These men are the immoral ones, the atheists who are impervious to every breath coming from on high. The atheist is the indifferent, the superficial and frivolous who has no cult save that of interest and self-gratification. England to all appearance one of the most religious countries of the world is in fact the most atheistic; for it is the least ideal. Unlike some of the Latin orators I do not wish to fall into

the *convicium saeculi.* I believe that there exist in the souls of the nineteenth century just as many intellectual needs as in those of any other epoch, and am convinced that at no time were there so many minds open to criticism. The misfortune is that the prevailing frivolity condemns them to form a world apart, and that the aristocracy of the century, which is that of wealth, has as a rule lost the ideal sense of life. I am only speaking conjecturally; for that world is utterly unknown to me and it would be easier to me to quote illustrious exceptions than exactly point out those at whom in this instance my reproach is aimed. Nevertheless it seems to me that a society which *de facto* only encourages a wretched literature in which everything is reduced to measure and adjustment, that a society which finds no middle course between an absence of moral ideas and a religion which it has first "*boned*" to make it more acceptable, that such a society, I repeat, is far from the true and grand sentiments of humanity. The future is with those who taking life seriously, come back to the eternal foundation of truth, that is to human nature, taken in the mass and not in its extreme refinements. For humanity will always be serious, believing, religious and the frivolity which believes in nothing will never hold the foremost place in human affairs.

It seems to me that we ought not to attach too much importance to all that speechifying which has become trite against the *utilitarian* and realistic tendencies of our days, and if aught could prove the lack of sincerity of those lamentations it would be the strange resignation with which those who utter them submit to the inevitable necessities of the century. In fact nearly all seem disposed to wind up with the line:

"The good old time, the iron age."

Whatever one's opinion may be with regard to the tendencies of the century, it would at any rate be

fair to admit that, the sum total of activity having increased there may have been increment on the one side, without a falling off on the other. It cannot be disputed that there is more commercial and industrial activity in our days then there was, for instance, in the tenth century. And must we therefore conclude that the latter was better endowed in respect of intellectual activity?

There is a kind of optical illusion in history which is very dangerous. The actual century is always seen through a cloud of dust raised by the whirl of real life and one can scarcely distinguish amidst this whirlwind the pure and beautiful forms of the ideal. On the other hand, this cloud of petty interests having vanished from before the past, it appears to us grave, severe, disinterested. Looking at it by means of its books and monuments only, in other words, in the manifestation of its thought, we are tempted to believe that people did nothing else but think. The noise of the street, the stir of the mart do not come down to posterity. When the future shall see us freed from that deafening tumult, it will judge us as we judge the past. The race of egoists who have no feeling either for art, science or morality is "of all times." But they die without leaving a trace, they have no place in that grand piece of historical tapestry-work which humanity weaves and leaves to be unrolled behind it. They are the noisy waves that plash beneath the paddle wheels of the steamer in its course, but become silent behind it.

Therefore, let those who dread to see the efforts of the mind stifled by material preoccupations take heart. Intellectual culture, speculative research, in one word, science and philosophy possess the best of all guarantees, I mean, the needs of human nature itself. Man will never live by bread alone; the disinterested pursuit of the true, the beautiful and the good, the realization of science, of art, of morality is as imperative a want to him as the need of satisfying

his hunger and his thirst. Besides, the activity, the apparent aim of which is only material improvement has nearly always an intellectual value. What speculative discovery has affected civilization as much as the discovery of steam? A railway does more for human progress than a work of genius, which, from purely extraneous circumstances may be deprived of its influence.

It cannot be denied that Christianity has done a great wrong to humanity in representing the actual life as a matter of no moment and consequently dissuading man from the idea of improving it. For though "it is the spirit that quickeneth," and "the flesh profiteth nothing," the grand reign of the spirit will not commence until the material world shall be completely under man's control. Besides, the actual life is the stage of that perfect life which Christianity relegated to the world beyond. There is nothing exaggerated in the spiritualism of the Gospel nor in the exclusive preponderance it gives to a higher life. But it is here below and not in a fantastic heaven that this life will be realized. It is essential therefore that man should commence by assuming the mastership of the bodily world in order to be at liberty afterwards for the victories of the spirit. That is where the injustice lies of the anathema flung by Christianity against the present life. All the great material and social improvements of this life have been accomplished outside Christianity and have even been prejudicial to it. Hence the annoyance of the actual representatives of Catholicism at all the most rational reforms of the abuses of the past, judicial reforms, penal reforms, etc. They are well aware that all this hangs together, and that one step on that road necessarily entails all the rest. Posterity will, no doubt, not wholly approve our materialistic tendencies. It will, no doubt, judge our work as we judge that of Christianity and find it equally one-sided. But it will at any rate admit that unconsciously we have laid down the condition

of future progress, and that our "industrialism" has been, with regard to its results, a holy and meritorious work.

A certain number of social doctrines are often taunted with concerning themselves solely with material interests, with the supposition that there exists only one kind of work for man and one kind of food, with the ideal conception of an easy life for all. This is unfortunately the case, nevertheless, one is bound to observe that if those systems could really bring about the material improvement of a considerable portion of humanity the reproach would not hold water. Because the improvement of the material condition is the necessary condition of moral and intellectual improvement, and that item of progress will like every other have to be accomplished by a special work; humanity cannot do two things at once. It is evident that a man who has not the necessities of life, or in order to procure them is compelled to devote himself to some kind of mechanical labour every minute of the day is forcibly condemned to dependence and utter insignificance. At the present period, the most signal service one could render to the human intellect would be to discover a system which would insure material comfort to every one. The human intellect will only be free when completely emancipated from those material needs that humiliate it and obstruct its development. Such improvements possess no ideal value in themselves, but they are the essential condition of the dignity of humankind and the perfection of the individual. That protracted labour by which the middle classes managed to accumulate wealth during the whole of the Middle Ages is apparently something sufficiently vulgar. We cease to look at it in that way by reflecting that the whole of modern civilization which is the work of the trading classes would have been impossible without it. The secularization of science could only be accomplished by an independent, consequently a well-to-do class. If the urban popu-

lations had remained poor or fettered by incessant manual labour like the peasant, science would be up to this day, the monopoly of the priestly class. Everything that contributes to the progress of humanity, however humble and commonplace it may appear, is by the very fact entitled to respect and sacred.

It is odd that the two classes which nowadays have divided French society between them fling reciprocally the charge of materialism. In common fairness we are bound to say that the materialism of the opulent class only is blamable. The striving of the poorer classes after material welfare is just, legitimate and sacred, seeing that the poorer classes cannot attain real holiness, by which I mean moral and intellectual perfection unless they acquire a certain degree of material welfare. When a well-to-do man still seeks after greater wealth, he does a thing which to say the least is profane, seeing that his only aim can be indulgence of self. But when a poor wretch strives to lift himself above want he attempts a virtuous task, for he tries to carry out the condition of his redemption. He does the right thing at the right moment. When Cleanthes spent his nights in drawing water he did as saintly a work as when he spent his days in listening to Zeno. I cannot help getting angry whenever I hear the fortunate ones of the century stigmatize the feeling with which the proletarian looks upon the more distinguished existence of the superior classes as one of vile jealousy and disgraceful lust. You think it disgraceful that they should desire that which you enjoy. You would preach to the people monastic confinement and abstinence from all pleasure, when pleasure is the alpha and omega of your life, when you have poets who sing of nothing else. If the life is a good one, why should not they desire to lead it also? If it is bad, why do you enjoy it?

The tendency towards material improvements is therefore far from prejudicial to the progress of the

human intellect provided it be fittingly ordained to its end. That which debases and degrades is the mean spirit brought to bear upon it; the petty combinations, the shabby processes resorted to in the race for wealth. I honestly believe that it would be better to leave the people to their poverty than to educate them in that way. Ignorant and uncultivated, they blindly aspire to the ideal by virtue of the powerful and inarticulate instinct of human nature, they are energetic and true like all great masses whose consciousness is still benighted. Inspire them with those paltry instincts of lucre and you lower them, you destroy their originality without making them more moral or educated. The science of *Bonhomme Richard* has always seemed to me a sufficiently bad science. Just fancy a man who sums up his life in the words; *to make a fortune honestly;* (and even then there is a suspicion that *honestly* is only recommended in order *the better* to make the fortune) the last thing of which one needs to think, a thing of no value save as a means to an ulterior and ideal end. This is immoral, this is a narrow and finite conception of existence; this can only proceed from a soul void of religion and poetry (36). Great Heavens, what is the good, I ask you, what is the good of having realized at the termination of the short life of ours the more or less complete type of outward happiness? What is better is to have thought and loved a good deal, to have cast a resolute glance at all things, to be able to criticize death itself while on one's death-bed. I prefer a Jogui, I prefer an Indian Mouni, nay Simon Stylites himself gnawed at by the worms on his strange pedestal to a prosaic trader capable of pursuing for a score of years the one selfsame idea of wealth.

Ye heroes of the disinterested life, saints, apostles, cenobites, ascetics of all epochs, sublime poets and philosophers who preferred to have no inheritance here below; sages who went through life having the left eye fixed on earth, the right on Heaven, and

above all you, godlike Spinoza who remained poor and forgotten for the sake of cultivating your idea and in order the better to worship the infinite, how much better did you understand life than those who treat it as a narrow calculation of interest, as an insignificant struggle of ambition and vanity. Better would it have been, no doubt, not to have put your God in so remote an abstract, not to have placed Him on such a nebulous height where to contemplate Him you were compelled to take up so uncomfortable a position. God is not only in Heaven, He is near every one of us; He is in every flower you crush beneath your feet, in the breath that wafts its odour over you, in that small life which buzzes and murmurs everywhere around you, in your heart above all. How much more proof of the needs and the extremely sensitive instincts of humanity do I find in your sublime madness than in those colourless existences never lighted up by a single ray of the ideal, of those existences which from their first to their last moments have proceeded day by day, exact, ruled like the leaves of a counter ledger.

Certainly we ought not to regret seeing the peoples pass from spontaneous, blind aspiration to clear and well considered perception, but it must be on the condition that the object proposed to this thoughtful consideration be not unworthy to occupy it. The tendency which at certain epochs of civilization impels certain minds to be smitten with admiration of barbaric and original peoples is a logical and in a sense a legitimate one. For the barbarian with his dreams and his fables is better than the positive man who understanding stops at the finite. Perfection would be the aspiration towards the ideal, that is religion, not operating in the world of chimeras and fantastic creations, but in that of the reality. Until we have got to understand that the ideal is near every one of us we shall not be able to prevent certain natures (and these the most beautifully constituted ones) from seeking it beyond

the vulgar existence, and finding their delight in asceticism. The sceptic and the frivolous minded may shrug their shoulders as much as they like and as long as they like at the folly of those beautiful natures, it will make no difference to them. Religious and pure natures understand them, the philosopher admires them, like every energetic manifestation of a real need which mistakes its road for want of criticism and rationalism.

Nothing is easier with our positive spirit than to point out the absurdity of all the sacrifices a man makes of his welfare in obedience to the suprasensible. To the realist the man on his knees before the invisible looks uncommonly like an imbecile, and if antique libations were still in usage (37), there are many people who would say with the apostles; *Ut quid perditio hæc?* Why waste this liquor thus? You would have done better to drink or to sell it, which might have given you pleasure or profit, than to sacrifice it to the invisible. Saint-Eulalia fascinated by the charm of asceticism escapes from the paternal home, takes the first road she comes to, wanders about at haphazard, gets lost in the bogs and cuts her feet in the brambles. "The girl was mad;" I hear people say. You may call her mad, as long as you like, I would give everything I possess to have seen her at that moment. Our judgments on a life of asceticism all start from the same principle; the ascetic sacrifices himself to the useless; hence he is absurd. Or else, if an apology for the life is attempted, it will be solely for the material services it has been able to render accidentally, without the consideration that those services were utterly foreign to its aim, and that those works that are accounted a title to glory, had no value attached to them, save in so far as they contributed to his asceticism. Assuredly he who would embrace a useless life, not from the need of contemplation but simply for the sake of idleness (and this was what happened during the degeneracy of the institution)

would be thoroughly contemptible. As for pure asceticism, it will always remain, like the pyramids, one of those grand monuments of the inmost needs of man, manifesting themselves with energy and grandeur, but with too little conscience and reason. The principle of asceticism is eternal in humanity, the progress of thought will impart to it a more rational direction (38). The ascetic of the future will not be the Trappist monk, one of the most imperfect types of man, he will be the lover of the purely beautiful, sacrificing to this dear ideal all the personal needs of the lower life.

The English have imagined that they were furthering the cause of sacred morality by prohibiting in India the processions stained with the blood of voluntary sacrifices, the *suttee*. A strange mistake indeed. Do you really believe that the fanatic who joyfully lays down his head under the wheels of the car of Juggernauth is not happier and more beautiful than you, insipid merchants. Do not you think that he honours human nature more by attesting—in an irrational, but none the less powerful manner, no doubt—that man has within him instincts superior to all the cravings for the finite and the love of self. Undoubtedly if we looked upon those acts as the mere sacrifice to a chimerical deity, they would be simply absurd. But we look upon them as the fascination which the infinite exercises on man, as impersonal enthusiasm, the cult of the suprasensible. And it is upon those magnificent outbursts of the grand instincts of human nature that you would impose limits, with your paltry morality and your narrow common sense. . . . In those sublime and picturesque exaggerations of human nature there is a foolhardiness, a spontaneousness which the healthy and regular exercise of reason, do what it will, will never equal, and which the poet and the artist will always prefer (39). A morbid and exclusive development is more original and shows in greater relief the energy of nature, like an injected vein which stands

out more clearly to the inspection of the anatomist. Go and have a look in the Louvre at the marvellous Spanish collection; it is ecstasy and the superhuman incarnated, saints whose feet scarcely touch earth; virgins with necks craned, haggard eyes, staring into space, martyrs who wrench their hearts from their bodies or lacerate themselves, monks undergoing all kinds of self torture, etc. Well, I love those monks of Ribeira and Zurbaran, without which one would fail to understand the Inquisition. It is the moral force of man exaggerated, off the track, but original and bold in its excess. The apostle is certainly not the pure type of humanity, nevertheless, where shall we find a more powerful manifestation for the psychologist from which to study the inmost energy of human nature and its divine outbursts?

We must make due allowance for everything. Some of the charges preferred against the middle class civilization by the adversaries of the modern spirit are unquestionably true. The Middle Ages which assuredly understood the reality of life less well than we do, understood in some respects the suprasensible life better than we do. The error of the neo-feudal school lies in its non-perception of the fact that the faults of modern society are necessary to its character of transition, that these faults arise from a perfectly legitimate tendency operating under an exclusive and partial form. And this very partial form is also necessary; for it is one of humanity's laws that it must proceed with its phases the one after the other, and in setting aside temporarily all the rest; whence arises the incomplete appearance of all its successive developments.

If aught could inspire doubt in the mind of the thinker with regard to the future of reason, it would no doubt be the absence of grand originality and the small initiative displayed by humanity as it proceeds on its roads of reflection. When we compare the timid works brought forth with so much travail by our reasoning age with the sublime creations en-

gendered by primitive spontaneity, engendered without so much as a feeling of their difficulty; when we ponder the strange facts which must have taken possession of men's consciences in order to create a generation of martyrs and apostles, we might be tempted to regret that man has ceased to be instinctive in order to become rational. But we are comforted with the thought that if his inward potentiality has diminished, his creation has become much more personal, that he is much more the master of his own work, that he is its author by virtue of a more lofty title; with the thought in sum that the actual condition of things is only a painful, difficult condition, full of effort and hard striving through which the human intellect will have had to pass towards a superior state; with the thought that the progress of the rational state will bring about another phase, in which the intellect will be once more the creator, but freely and with more conscience of its work. It is no doubt very sad for the man of intellect to have to pass through those ages of "little faith," to see sacred things railed at by the profane and to be exposed to the insulting laughter of triumphant frivolity. But it matters not; he is the custodian of the sacred deposit, he is the standard bearer of the future, he is man in the grand and extended signification of the word. And he knows it, hence his joy and his sadness; his sadness because he is permeated with the love of the perfect, it grieves him to think that so many consciences should for ever be closed to it; his joy, because he knows that the mainsprings of humanity never wear out; that, though momentarily overcome with sleep, they are there nevertheless, deep down his inmost being and that one day they will wake up to astonish by their proud originality and their invincible energy both their timid apologists and their insolent despisers.

Let us suppose for a moment that a thought as original, as powerful as that of Christianity were to appear to-day. At the first glance it looks as if it

would make no headway at all. Selfishness is dominant, the sense of grand devotion and of disinterested apostleship is lost. The century seems to obey two motives only; fear and interest. At such a spectacle a deep sadness comes over the soul. It is all over then? We must bid farewell to great things; noble thoughts will have no existence save in the recollections of the orator; religion will no longer be aught but a check in the hands of the frightened wealthier classes. The sea of ice is for ever spreading and getting more solid. Who shall be able to break through it?

Timid friends who thus despair of humanity, let us go back together eighteen hundred years. Fancy that you are living at that period when a handful of obscure men founded in the East the dogma which since then has governed humanity. Cast a glance at the contemptible world that obeyed Tiberius, and tell me whether the world is really dead. Chant once more the funeral hymn of humanity; for humanity is no more, its heart is still in the cold grip of death. How are these poor enthusiasts to endow it with life once more; how, without a lever, can they uplift a world? Well, they have done it nevertheless; three hundred years later the new dogma was master, and four hundred years after that it became tyrant in its turn.

This is our triumphant reply. The condition of humanity will never be so desperate as to preclude us from saying; "Many a time it was believed to be dead. The gravestone seemed fastened down for ever, and the third day it uprose from the dead."

CHAPTER V.

It is not altogether inadvertently that I designate by the name of *science* that which is generally called *philosophy*. To philosophize is the word by which I would most willingly sum up my life; nevertheless, seeing that the popular use of the word only expresses a still partial form of the inner life, that, besides, it only implies the subjective fact of the solitary thinker we must employ the more objective word; to *know* when assuming the standpoint of humanity. Yes, the day will come when humanity will no longer believe; but when it shall know; the day when it shall know the metaphysical and moral world as it already knows the physical; the day when the government of humanity will no longer be given to accident and intrigue, but to the rational discussion as to what is best, and to the most efficacious means of attaining that best. If such be the aim of science, if its object be to teach man its final aim and its law, to make him grasp the true sense of life, to make up, with art, poetry and virtue the divine ideal which alone lends worth to human existence, if such be its aim, then is it possible that it should have its serious detractors?

"But," it will be asked, "will science accomplish these marvellous destinies?" All I know is this, that if science does not accomplish them, nothing else will, and that humanity will for ever be ignorant of the significance of things; for science is the only legitimate means of knowing, and that if it has been

possible for the religions to exercise a salutary influence on the march of humanity it is solely because science was obscurely mixed up with them, that is to say, the regular exercise of the human intellect.

If we were to confine ourselves to what science has done hitherto without considering the future we might well ask ourselves whether it will ever carry out this programme, whether it will succeed in providing humanity with a symbol comparable to that of the religions. Up till now science has done little else but destroy. Applied to nature itself, it has destroyed its mystery and its charm by showing mathematical forces there where the popular imagination saw life, moral expression and liberty. Applied to the history of the human intellect, it has destroyed those poetical superstitions of privileged individuals, in the admiration of which semi-science took so great a delight. Applied to moral things it has destroyed the comforting beliefs which nothing can replace in the heart that was at rest in them. Where is the man who after having given himself up to science *with all his heart* has not cursed the day when thought became his birthright, who has not hankered after some fond, lost illusion? As for me, I admit having often been torn with regret; yes, there were days when I still wished to be at rest with the simple-minded, when I should have felt annoyed with criticism and rationalism, if it were possible to be annoyed with fate. The first feeling of him who deserts the ranks of naïve belief for those of critical investigation, is that of regret and almost anathema against that inflexible power, which from the moment it seizes upon him, compels him to accompany it through every stage of its irresistible march, until the final goal where one stops to weep (40). Unhappy like the Cassandra of Schiller through having seen too much of the reality, he is almost tempted to exclaim, "Restore me to my blindness." But are we to conclude from this that science is only fit to take the colour out of life, and to destroy beautiful dreams?

Let me first of all frankly admit that if such be the case, it is an evil beyond remedy, necessary and for which we should blame no one. If there be aught fatal on earth, it is reason and science. It is useless to grumble at it and to get impatient, and the anger of the orthodox folk against the freethinkers really makes one laugh; because it looks as if the latter had really had it in their power to develop themselves in a different fashion, as if a man were free to believe what he likes. It is impossible to prevent reason from taking up every object of belief, and all these objects lending themselves to criticism, reason is fatally bound to declare that they do not constitute absolute truth. There is not a single link in this chain which one was free to shake off for a single moment; the only culprit in the matter is human nature and its legitimate evolution. And the unquestionable principle is that human nature is without reproach and proceeds towards the perfect by means of forms successively and diversely imperfect.

The fact is that science will only have destroyed the dreams of the past to put in their stead a reality a thousand times superior. If science were to remain what it is we should have to submit to it while cursing it, for it has destroyed and not builded up again; it has awakened man from a sweet sleep, without smoothing the reality to him. What science gives me is not enough, I am still hungry. If I believed in any religion, my faith, I admit, would have the greater wherewithal to satisfy its hunger, but a small modicum of good science is better than a great deal of haphazard science. If we had to admit literally all that legend-mongers and chroniclers tell us about the origin of peoples and religions we should know a great deal more about them than with the system of Niebuhr and Strauss. The ancient history of the East in its ascertained facts might be reduced to a few pages; if we were to put our faith in Hebrew, Arabic, Persian and Greek histories, etc., we should have a library full. Folk with whom the

craving to believe is very developed may afford themselves the pleasure of swallowing all that. The critical intellect is the sober man, or if you like, the fastidious man; he makes sure above all and beforehand, of the quality. He prefers abstention to indiscriminate acceptance, he prefers truth to himself, and sacrifices his most lovely dreams to it. Think you then that it would not be much more pleasant to us to sing in the temple with the women or to dream with the children than to be pursuing on those inhospitable mountains a truth which is for ever fleeing. Do not, therefore, twit us with knowing so very few things, for you, you *know* nothing at all. The little we do know is at any rate perfectly acquired and will ever go on increasing. Our guarantee is the most invincible of inductions, derived from the example of the sciences of nature.

"If," as Burke maintains, "our ignorance of the things of nature, is the principal cause of our admiration of them, if this ignorance became to us the source of the feeling for the sublime," we might ask ourselves whether modern science by rending the veil that hid from us the forces and the agents of physical phenomena, and by showing us everywhere a regularity subject to mathematical laws and consequently devoid of mystery, has furthered the contemplation of the universe, been of service to æstheticism, while furthering at the same time the knowledge of truth. The patient investigations of the observer, the figures accumulated by the astronomer, the long enumerations of the naturalist are scarcely calculated to awaken the sense of the beautiful, but the genuinely beautiful, that which is not based upon fictions of human fantasy is hidden in the results of analysis. To dissect a human body is to destroy its beauty, and still by means of this dissection, science arrives at the recognition of a much superior order of beauty, which superficial examination would not have as much as suspected. No doubt the enchanted world in which humanity dwelt previous to its

entrance upon life guided by thought, the world conceived as being moral, replete with passion, life, and sentiment, that world possessed an ineffable charm; and it is likely that face to face with that inflexible and severe nature created for us by rationalism, some may be tempted to regret the miracle and to reproach scientific experiments with having banished it from the universe. But such a reproach could only be based upon an incomplete view of the results of science. For the real world revealed to us by science is by far superior to the fantastic world created by the imagination. If the human intellect had been challenged to conceive the most surprising marvels, if the limits which realisation imposes on the ideal had been knocked down in favour of the human intellect, if all this had been done even then it would not have dared to conceive a thousandth part of the splendours revealed by observation. We may go on inflating our conceptions as long as we like, we only bring forth atoms at the expense of the reality of things. Is it not a strange fact that all the ideas which primitive science had formed on the world appear narrow, trivial, and ridiculous to us after that which has been proved to be true. The earth resembling a disc, a column, a cone, the sun as big as the Peloponnesus, or else conceived to be a meteor, lighting itself every day, the stars trundling about at a few leagues distance on a solid vault, concentric spheres, *a universe closed*, stifling, walls, a narrow hemisphere against which the instinct of the infinite is shattered (41), thése were some of the most brilliant hypotheses at which the human intellect had arrived. Beyond these, truly, was the world of angels with its everlasting splendour; but even there what narrow limits, what finite conceptions. Has not the temple of our God become enlarged since science has revealed to us the infinity of worlds? And still people were free then to create marvels; there was plenty of stuff to cut from and to spare, if I may so express it; observation placed no

check on fantasy; but it was the experimental method which many delight in representing as narrow and without idealism which had the honour of revealing to us not that metaphysical infinite the idea of which is the foundation itself of man's reason, but that real infinite which he never attains in his boldest flights of fancy. Hence, we may fearlessly contend that if the marvellous in fiction has up till now seemed necessary to poetry, the marvellous in nature, when it shall be unveiled in all its splendour will constitute a poetry a thousand times more sublime, a poetry which will be reality itself, which will be science and philosophy at the same time. If the experimental knowledge of the physical universe has exceeded by far the dreams of imagination, are we not justified in believing that the human intellect by investigating more and more closely the metaphysical and moral sphere and applying its severest method to it without any consideration for chimeras and desirable dreams—if there be such, are we not justified in believing that by doing this it will simply shatter a narrow and paltry world to open another world of infinite marvels? Who knows but what our metaphysics and theology are not to those to be one day revealed by rational science as the Cosmos of Anaximenes or Indicopleustes to the Cosmos of Herschel and Humboldt.

The above consideration, it appears to me, is as eminently calculated to reassure us on the future and eventual results of science, as to justify all boldness and to condemn all timid restriction. However destructive a criticism may seem, we should give it free scope, provided it be really scientific; salvation never comes by going backward. It is, first of all too evident that the very consciousness of having retreated before the salutary method, and the permanent sentiment of a fictitious objection would cast over the whole of ulterior existence a scepticism more distressing than denial itself. We must either never discuss at all, or discuss to the end. Besides,

it is certain that the true moral system of things is infinitely superior to the wretched hypotheses overtoppled by severe reasoning, that one day science will unfold a reality a thousand times more beautiful, and that criticism in that way will have been a first step in the direction of beliefs more comforting than those which it seems to destroy. Yes, if I were to see all the truths constituting what is called natural religion, a personal God, Providence, prayer, anthropomorphism, personal immortality, etc.; if I were to see all these truths, without which there is no happy life go to wreck beneath the legitimate effort of critical examination, I should clap my hands for joy over their ruin, thoroughly convinced that the real system of things, of which I may be still ignorant but in the direction of which this very denial is a step, infinitely surpasses the poor imaginations without which we cannot conceive the beauty of the universe. The gods only go to make room for others. That infinite beauty which we perceive only in vague outlines and which we endeavour to reproduce by paltry images exists, truly exists. It is more beautiful, more comforting a thousand times by far than that which my imagination may have conjured up. When the old anthropomorphic conception of the world disappeared before positive science, one might have been for a moment tempted to exclaim: "Good-bye to poetry, good-bye to the beautiful," and behold, the beautiful has revived more beautiful than ever. In the same way the moral world is far from having received a mortal blow by the destruction of old chimeras, the most realistic method being that which will lead us to its most dazzling marvels, and until we have discovered ineffable splendour, intoxicating truths, delightful and comforting beliefs we may rest assured that we are not within the truth, that we are merely passing through one of those fatal periods of transition when humanity ceases to believe in chimerical beauties ere it arrives at the discovery of the marvels of the reality. We should never get

frightened at the onward march of science, seeing that we may be sure that it will only lead to the discovery of incomparably beautiful things. Let us leave vulgar natures to exclaim with Micah when they had taken away his idols; "Ye have taken away my gods." Let us leave them to say with Serapion the converted anthropomorphist of Mount Athos; "Alas, they have taken away my god, and I no longer know what I worship." As for us, when the temple topples down, instead of weeping on its ruins, let us think of the temples, which more magnificent and vast, will uprise in the future until the day when for ever shattering their narrow walls, thought will only have one temple, the roof of which will be the sky.

Hence, science must pursue its road without minding with whom it comes in collision. Let the others get out of the way. If it appears to raise objections against received dogmas, it is not for science but the received dogmas to be on the defensive and to reply to the objections. Science should behave as if the world were free from preconceived opinions, and not heed the difficulties it starts. Let the theologians come to an arrangement with one another to come to an agreement with science. We may as well take it for granted that that which is infinitely exceeds in beauty any and everything that which may be conceived; that the Utopian who sets his fancy to work in the creation of the best possible world only brings forth child's work in comparison with the reality; that when positive science only reveals triviality and finiteness, it is because it has not reached its final result. Fourier, scattering broadcast belts, crowns and *auroræ boreales* over the various worlds is nearer the truth than the physicist who thinks his small universe equal to that of God, and still, one day Fourier will be surpassed by the realists who will know the truth of things through unquestionable scientific observation.

The reader will allow me to cite an example.

The old manner of looking at immortality is in my opinion a "survival" of the conceptions of the primitive world and seems to me as narrow and as unacceptable as the anthropomorphic God. Man, in fact, is not to me, a composite of two substances, he is a unit, an individual resultant, a great persistent phenomenon, a thought prolonged. On the other hand, as soon as we deny immortality in an absolute manner, the world becomes colourless and sad. Now, it is an unquestionable fact that the world is beautiful beyond expression. Hence, we are bound to admit that everything which has been sacrificed in the furtherance of progress will be recovered at the end of the infinite, by a kind of immortality which moral science is sure to discover one of these days (42), and which will be to the fantastic immortality of the past as the palace of Versailles to a house of cards put together by a child. One may say as much of all the dogmas of our natural religion and morality, so colourless, so narrow, so lacking in the poetical that I should be afraid of offending God by believing in them. One may compare the old dogmas to those hypotheses of the physical sciences which afford sufficiently exact formulas for the representation of facts, though their expression be very faulty and contains a considerable part of fiction. One cannot say; "things are thus;" but one may say that, "things proceed as if it were thus." In calculating by the light of these hypotheses, one will get at exact results, because the error lies only in the expression and the illustration not in the *schema* and the category itself.

For the sake of the ultimate welfare of humanity there are centuries condemned to scepticism and immorality. To get from the beautiful, poetical world of the naïve peoples we have had to pass through the atomic and mechanical world. In the same way, in order to create for itself a new world of beliefs humanity must destroy the old, which can only be done by passing through an age of incredulity

and speculative immorality. I say speculative, for no one has the right to throw the blame of his personal immorality on the century; elevated souls are under the happy necessity of being virtuous and the eighteenth century has proved that the most hideous doctrines may go hand in hand with the purest conduct and the most honourable character. This is an inconsistency, if you like. But there is no condition of humanity which can do without, and the first step of him who would think is to grow bolder in the face of contradictions, trusting to the future to reconcile them. A man who is consistent in his system of life is assuredly a narrow-minded one. For I defy him, in the actual condition of the human intellect to make all the elements of human nature agree. If he wants a system without a joint, he will be reduced to deny and to exclude.

Paltry and absolute criticism always springs from the fact of looking at every development of philosophical history by itself and not from the point of view of humanity. All the conditions through which humanity passes are faulty and assailable. Every century proceeds towards the future, carrying its objection in its side like a bullet in a wound. The destruction of ancient beliefs and the formation of new ones is not always accomplished in the most desirable order. Science often destroys a belief when it is still necessary. Let us suppose that the day will come when humanity shall have no longer any need to believe in immortality, can we imagine the anguish the premature destruction of this comforting faith will have caused to the unfortunate ones sacrificed to fate during our age of sorrow. In the definite constitution of humanity science will be happiness; but in the imperfect state through which we are passing it may be dangerous to know too soon.

My inmost conviction is that the religion of the future will be pure *humanism*, that is, the cult of everything that appertains to man, the whole of life sanctified and raised to a moral value. *To tend*

one's beautiful humanity (43) will then be the Law and the Prophets, and that without any particular form, without any limit which will remind one of sect, or of exclusive brotherhood. The general characteristic of religious works is their specialness, that is, they require to be understood a special sense which every one has not; separate beliefs, separate feelings, separate style, separate figures. Religious works are for adepts; for they, the works, assume the existence of the profane. Assuredly St. Paul was an admirable genius; still, does the beauty of his letters consist in the grand instincts of human nature taken in the most general form as, for instance, in the dialogues of Plato? No. Seneca and Tacitus, perusing these curious compositions would not have considered them beautiful, at any rate not to the same extent that we do, initiated as we are in the data of Christian æsthetics. Several religious sects of the East, the Druses, the Mendaïtes, the Ansarians have sacred writings affording them a very substantial pabulum, but which to us are ridiculous or utterly insignificant. The sectarian's mind is closed to half of the world. Every *sect* presents itself to us circumscribed by limits; and no matter what limit is most antipathetic to our expansion of mind. We have seen so many of them that we cannot resign ourselves to the belief that the one any more than the other has got hold of the absolute truth. While willingly admitting that grand originality has up till now been sectarian or at any rate dogmatic, we cannot fail to see with equal certainty the absolute impossibility of confining the human intellect in the future in any of those vices. With a consciousness of humanity as developed as ours, we should soon bring about the reconciliation, we should judge ourselves as we judge the past, we should criticize ourselves whilst alive. Sectarian dogmatism is irreconcilable with criticism, for how can one help testing on one's self the laws observed in the development of other doctrines, and how can one

reconcile absolute belief with such a reflective view? We may therefore say without hesitation that no religious sect will henceforth spring up in Europe unless new and ingenuous races strangers to thought, stifle once more all civilization; and even then one may affirm that this form of religion will be far less energetic than in the past and will not result in anything very characteristic. People are not converted from *finesse* to stupidity. One always remembers having been a critic and is often taken with laughter—even at one's adversaries in default of others. And apostles never laugh; laughter means scepticism already, for after having laughed at others, if one be consistent, one will also laugh at one's self.

For a religious sect to become henceforth possible we should want a deep moat of oblivion like that dug by barbaric invasion in which all the recollections of the modern world must be shot. Keep but one library, one school, one more or less significant monument, and you preserve criticism, or at least, the remembrance of a critical age. And, I repeat, there is but one means of being cured of criticism as of scepticism, namely, to forget radically its previous development and to recommence on another footing. That is why all the religious sects which for the last half century have endeavoured to establish themselves in Europe have struck against the spirit of criticism which took them on their ridiculous and irrational side to a degree such that the sectaries in their turn choose the wiser part of laughing at themselves. The century is so little religious as to have been unable to give birth even to a heresy (44). To attempt a religious innovation is to perform an act of belief, and it is because the world knows well enough that nothing is to be done in that order of things that it becomes bad taste to change anything in the *statu quo* of religion. France is of all countries the most orthodox for it is the least religious country in the world. If France had to a greater extent the

sentiment of religion, it would have become Protestant like Germany. But not understanding anything of theology, and nevertheless feeling the need of a belief she thinks it easier to take the ready made system readiest to hand without caring in the least to make it more perfect; because to attempt to make it more perfect would be to take it earnestly, it would be assuming the part of theologian; and it is the correct thing with us to profess not to concern one's self with that kind of thing. Nothing is nearer to indifference than orthodoxy. The heresiarch has then, nothing to hope for nowadays, either from the severe orthodox who would anathematize him, or from the freethinkers who would smile at the attempt to reform that which cannot be reformed.

There is a very delicate line of demarcation beyond which the philosophical school becomes a sect; woe to him who crosses it. In a moment the language becomes altered; one no longer speaks to the world at large, there is an affectation of mystical form, a kind of incredulity and superstition creeps into doctrines—one knows not whence—that seemed altogether rational, reverie becomes mixed with science in an indistinguishable tissue. The school of Alexandria presents the most curious instance of this transformation. Saint-Simonism has renewed it in our days. I am convinced that if that school had kept to the lines of Saint-Simon, who, though very superficial on account of his defective education had really the scientific spirit, and under the direction of Bazard, who was certainly a philosopher in the best acceptation of the word, it would have become the original philosophy of the France of the nineteenth century. But the moment the less earnest spirits take the upper hand, the dross of superstition appears, the school turns to religion, only arouses laughter and breathes its last at Menilmontant amidst extravagances which wind up the history of all sects. Assuredly a tremendous lesson for the future.

Large-minded and unfettered science without any bond but that of reason, without a defined creed, without temples, without priests, living at ease in what is called the profane world, that is the form of the beliefs which henceforth will carry humanity with them. The temples of this doctrine will be not schools like those of to-day, childish, cramped, scholastic, but resorts of leisure as in ancient times (*scholæ*) where men foregather to partake together of the food provided for supra-sensible minds. The priests are the philosophers, the *savants*, the poets, the artists, that is, the men who have accepted the ideal as part of their inheritance and have relinquished the earthly portion (45). In this way the poetic priesthood of the first pioneers of civilization will come back to us. Many admirable intellects have often expressed regret at philosophy not having its temples and pulpits. Let us have them by all means, provided that nothing shall be taught in them except what is taught at the Sorbonne and the College of France, that, in one word, they shall be schools, shorn of their pedagogic varnish. Schools are the real competitors with temples. If you raise altar against altar, you will be told; "We prefer the old ones, not because we have greater faith in them, but because our fathers worshipped that way." If we were entrusted with the religious education of the people, we should have to begin by its so-called profane education, by teaching them history, science, and languages. For real religion is only the culmination of intellectual culture and it will not be accessible to the masses, until education shall be accessible to all. Our glory lies in always appealing to light; we pride ourselves in not being understood save on the condition of superior culture, on our strength being in direct proportion to our civilization. The eighteenth century must in this respect, always remain our model; the eighteenth century which has changed the world and inspired energetic convictions without attempting to become a sect or a

religion and by remaining purely scientific and philosophical. Social and religious reform will assuredly come, seeing that every one is wishing for it, but it will not come from any one sect; it will come from the grand science, common to all, and operating in the unrestricted midst of human intelligence.

Hence the question of the future of religion must be resolved in divers ways according to the meaning attached to the word. If by religion we understand an *ensemble* of doctrines traditionally bequeathed, assuming a mythical form, exclusive and sectarian, then we are bound to say unhesitatingly, that the religions will have been the distinguishing mark of an epoch of humanity, but that they are in no way an integral part of human nature, and that one day they will disappear (46). If on the other hand we take the word to mean a belief accompanied by enthusiasm, crowning conviction with devotion and faith with sacrifice, then there is no doubt that humanity will never cease to be religious. But it is equally certain that henceforth no doctrine will have a chance of making headway without being solidly interwoven with humanity at large, and eliminating all speciality of form, without appealing to every one without distinction of adepts and profane. It causes me genuine grief to see distinguished intellects desert the grand audience of humanity in order to enact the easy part, so flattering to their estimate of self, of grand priests and prophets in conclaves which up till now are nothing more than clubs. What a difference between the philosopher whose name was formerly Pierre Leroux and the patriarch of a small church, surrounded by a knot of affiliated converts, concerning whom one hesitatingly puts the question; "Are they stupid enough to be believers?" In Heaven's name, if you do happen to have got hold of the truth, do address yourself to the whole of humanity. The man of secret societies is always narrow-minded, suspicious, one sided. The famili-

arity with such a small world destroys the familiarity with the great one; one ends by becoming suspicious of human nature and by founding the hope of success on factitious means, and obscure manœuvres. Great things are accomplished in open daylight. I do not mean to offend those whom present necessity compels to lock themselves in conclaves; very often, I am bound to say, they cannot help themselves. When the majority of the public is egotistical and immoral, we must pardon those who constitute themselves into secret committees, however prejudicial a blow such a life may strike at their intellectual development. Who shall blame the first Christians for having made unto themselves a world apart amidst the corrupt society of their times? Nevertheless, such a necessity is always a misfortune. One of the results of my historical studies, as far as I am personally concerned, has been to make me understand the apostle, the prophet, the founder of a religion; I am thoroughly aware of the sublimity and the errors inseparable from such an intellectual position. It seems to me that I have succeeded now and then in reproducing within myself by means of reflection the psychological facts that must have naturally perturbed those lofty souls. Well, I do not hesitate to say that the time for this kind of parts is gone by. The *universal*, that is, the human must henceforth be the outward criterion of a doctrine that solicits the faith of human kind. All that is sectarian must be placed on the same level with those products of a puny, weak literature which cannot live outside the atmosphere of the drawing-rooms in which they blossomed. We must be on our guard against those people who can only be understood by a committee. Common sense has relegated to its proper place that curious æsthetic school of *irony*, brought into fashion by Schlegel, where the artist proudly draping himself in his *virtuosity* and *geniality* made it a point to present nothing but insignificant and tasteless truisms, then

shrugged his shoulders at the denseness of the public which did not care for these platitudes. All that partakes of the nature of monopoly in the world of thought, all that requires, in order to be understood a kind of special revelation, a sense apart, not possessed by humanity, must be fatally driven towards the like excess.

Hence, science is a religion, science alone will henceforth make the creeds, science alone can solve for men the eternal problems, the solution of which his nature imperatively demands.

CHAPTER VI.

WHY then is science whose fate is so closely bound up with that of the human intellect so badly understood as a rule? Why does it seem only a pastime or a supplementary thing? Why is the learned man in France I do not say an object of chaff to the frivolous minded—that would be an honourable title as far as he himself is concerned—but a useless piece of furniture in the opinion of many refined minds, something analogous to those literary abbés who were part of the furniture of a nobleman's seat much in the same way as the library itself. In fact, *literature* proper is a great deal better understood. There is no one who, from a more or less elevated standpoint, does not admit the necessity of people to write plays, novels, and periodical articles. Truly, there are few who have a conception of the earnest side of literature and poetry; the literary man is, in the opinion of the majority, only fit to amuse them, and the *savant* not having the same privilege is for that very reason, voted useless and a bore. People are apt to think that this is the case because he investigates, edits and comments on the work of others. Besides it is so very easy to ridicule his patient researches. One must be dull indeed not to be able to coin a feeble joke on the subject of a man who spends his life in deciphering old marbles, in guessing at unknown alphabets, at interpreting and commenting on texts, which to the ignorant, are only ridiculous and absurd. Those jokes have that false appearance of

common sense, so powerful in France and which too often governs public opinion. A journalist, a manufacturer is considered a "serious" person. But the *savant* is of no account, unless he be a professor. Science should not put its head out of the college or special school, the public at large has no business with it. Let the professor occupy himself with it, that is right enough, it is his trade. But every one else who devotes his life to it meddles with what does not concern him, something like the man who learns a trade without ever intending to practise it. Hence the discredit attached to every branch of study not contributing directly to classical or pedagogical education, the necessity of which is accepted in good faith, without much knowledge of the reason why. The best judges acknowledge that all the branches of philological studies, the East and India above all may afford the history of the human intellect its most precious data. Then why is this California so little exploited? Alas, let us give the reason in its most prosaic harshness. It is because there is no outlet.

Whence arises this ignoble mistake? Let us first of all admit that a feeling of enthusiasm for science is much more rare and difficult in an age like ours which has witnessed such unquestionable progress in every branch of human knowledge than at an epoch when all the sciences were merely being created. Conquest and discovery imply a waking up and entail an exertion of strength which must remain foreign to those who need only march along in the already beaten track. Where is the philologist of our days who brings to his researches the intoxication of the first classical students, Petrarch, Boccacio, Poggio, Ambrose Traversari, the men who were so powerfully moved by the desire to know, who carried the worship of the new studies by which they enriched the human intellect to a degree of lofty mysticism, who suffered persecution, who starved in the pursuit of their ideal object. Where is the Orientalist who

raves on his subject like Guillaume Postel? Where is the astronomer capable of the ecstacies of Kepler, the student of physical science capable of the prophetic excitement of the two Bacons? It was the heroic age of science when one philologist haply counted among his *Anecdota* Homer, another Livy, a third Plato. It is very easy to stigmatize those noble follies with the rather equivocal term of pedantry, it is easier still to show that those passionate lovers of science had neither the good taste nor the severe method of our century. But might we not also envy them their powerful love and their disinterestedness?

It does not come within the scope of my plan to inquire in how far the system of public education in France is responsible for the decay of the scientific spirit. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the small importance attached among us to higher education, the total lack of an institution corresponding to that of the German *universities* is one of its principal causes (47). I am the least likely man to libel the teaching given at the faculties. Germany has nothing to compare to the Sorbonne or to the College of France. In fact, I am not aware of the existence outside Paris of an institution whither *savants* and thinkers come pretty well without a programme to entertain regularly a public solely attracted by the charm or the importance of their lectures. They are two admirable institutions, essentially French, but they are not like the German universities. They are far beyond them, but they do not answer the same purpose. Apart from a few courses of a character altogether special, the lack of a constant and compulsory audience does not allow of demonstration of a very scientific nature. Face to face with a public the majority of which wishes above all to be *interestingly amused*, the lecturer is bound to enunciate ingenious views, to afford ingenious glimpses, rather than rely upon scientific discussion. I am aware that those views are the principal aim which

we should set ourselves in scientific research; but however excellent the manner in which they are propounded, it can scarcely be denied that the courses which necessarily attract a great number of listeners and which exercise the greatest influence on the culture of the intellect, are the least likely to contribute to the spread of the scientific spirit. A great number of theories can, therefore, only find room in the curriculum of the lyceums, where science does not occupy its dignified position (48). How can public opinion be favourable to science, when the majority only know it from their old college recollections, which besides they are in a hurry to drop and which cannot make them conceive it in its true light? Hence, serious books and studies seem to have no significance save with a view to education, while on the contrary education should be only one of the least applications of science. This ridiculous prejudice is one of the greatest troubles in the path of him who devotes his life to pure science.

Thus by a strange reversal, science with us is only made for the schools, while the school should only be made for science. No doubt if the school in modern days were like that of antiquity, a gathering of men solely impelled by the desire to know and united by a common method of philosophizing, one might allow science to lock itself into it. But the school with us having as a rule a practical or *pedagogic* purpose, the reduction of science to narrow proportions, the supposition that philology is only of use in so far as it aids classical education is the greatest humiliation imaginable and most opposed to good sense. The department of science and serious research becomes in this way that of public education as if such things had no value except in so far as they are aids to education. Hence the idea that as soon as one's education is finished, one need not concern one's self any longer with them, and that they only concern the professors. In fact, it would be difficult indeed, I believe, to find among us

a philologist who does not in some way belong to the scholastic profession and a philological book, not written for the use of schools or with some other scholastic purpose. It is a strange vicious circle, for if these things are of no use save for the purpose of teaching, if they are to be studied only by those who are to teach them, what is the good of teaching them?

Heaven forbid that we should try to lower those noble and useful functions that help to prepare the seriously-inclined intellect for every career; but it appears to me that we should thoroughly distinguish between science and instruction and give to the former, apart from the latter a religious and philosophical aim. The *savant* and the professor differ as much from one another as the manufacturer and the retailer. The confusion that has arisen in peoples' minds with regard to them has contributed to throw a kind of slight on the most important branches of science, on the very ones which on account of their importance were considered worthy of being selected as the bases of classical studies. Fashion is not half so severe with regard to studies of lesser importance which do not happen to remind us in so awkward a way of our college days.

Hence, we must accustom ourselves to consider the application of certain branches of science and especially of philology to classical studies as something accessory and secondary from the standpoint of science. It is only in connection with positive philosophy that everything has its price and its value. The frivolous mind which does not understand science, pedantry which understands it badly and causes its depreciation both spring from an absence of the philosophic spirit. We must accustom ourselves to look for the value of knowledge in knowledge itself and not in the use one may make of it for the education of childhood or youth.

No doubt, by the natural force of things, the men most eminent in each branch of science will be called

upon to teach them, and reciprocally the professors will always have a gift apart. It is even worthy of note that all the most illustrious names in modern science are those of professors. One would look in vain among the free contingent of amateurs for Heynes, Bopps, Sacys, Burnoufs. Nevertheless, one cannot willingly blind one's self to the grave danger of science becoming too exclusively a matter of schools. It would contract habits of pedantry, which by investing it with a particular colour would drag it away from the grand midst of humanity. No one is more profoundly convinced than I that science cannot live without what we call the *technique*, no one has less sympathy than I have with the kind of drawing-room science, emasculated in form, trying to be interesting, a science of semi-scientific, semi-fashionable reviews. True science is that which belongs neither to the school, nor to the drawing-room, but which responds exactly to the want of man; that which shows no trace of institution or fictitious custom, in one word that which reminds us most of the schools of ancient Greece, which in this as in everything has given us the model of the pure and sincere. Look at Aristotle. The scientific apparel takes up more space with him that with no matter what modern *savant*, Kant perhaps excepted. It is evident that the human intellect delighted at the discovery of those orderly pigeon holes of thought which dialectics bring to light, attached at first too much importance to them and naïvely believed that every idea might advantageously be moulded in those forms. Still, is Aristotle, though so eminently *technical*, exactly *scholastic?* No. Compare his "Rhetoric" to the modern rhetorics, which after all and in reality are but so many weak reproductions of it, and you will on the one hand, have an original work, though strange in form, a true, albeit somewhat idle analysis of one of the facets of the human mind, on the other, books utterly insignificant and absolutely useless

outside the college. Compare the "Analytics" with the "scholastic logics" of the old school and you will be confronted with the same contrast. Therefore, in forbidding science to assume the scholastic air, we make no concession to the superficial intellect which should never be considered. We merely wish to bring science back to its grand and beautiful form which the French intellect understands so well. There is "good taste" in science as well as in literature which our countrymen have caught every now and then in a very superior and delicate way. German science is in this respect not bound to observe so many precautions. It may assume the scholastic air and surround itself with a scholastic perfume which with us would be considered scandalous. Are we to congratulate it on that account? Grave intellects readily make excuses for pedantry. They know that this form of intellectual labour is often necessary, always pardonable. No one objects to it in the classics of the Carlovingian restoration, nor in those of the Renaissance; the human intellect is sure to amuse itself for some time with its discoveries and the new results it introduces into science, it is bound to make a pleasant pastime, nay a toy of it, before making it an object of philosophic meditation. The same tone will be sure to crop up once more and will be equally pardoned in the exclusive and pre-occupied *savant* who works his mine with passion, especially if a powerful spirit does not come to the rescue to animate his patient researches, and if the simplicity of his outward life reduces him to the everlasting and unchanging rôle of *savant*. The higher philosophy, intercourse with society or the practical pursuit of business can alone preserve science from pedantry. But for many, many long years we shall still have to pardon the *savant* for being neither a philosopher, nor a man of the world, nor a statesman, even when they bear the title of *Court Councillors* as in Germany.

Our sensitiveness in this respect is perhaps one of the reasons why philology, though represented in

France by so many illustrious names is always held back by a kind of shamefacedness, and dares not proclaim itself openly. We are so terribly afraid of ridicule that everything which can possibly lend itself to it arouses our suspicion; and the most worthy things by slightly changing their name and shade lay themselves open to it. The term pedantry, which, if not clearly defined, may be so mischievously applied, and which with the unthinking is almost synonymous with everything relating to serious and scientific inquiry has in this way become a scarecrow to subtle and refined intellects who have often preferred to remain superficial rather than lay themselves open to the attack the most painful of all to us. This scruple has been carried so far that we have seen critics of the highest order of intellect deliberately leave their expressions incomplete rather than employ the scholastic word, when the scholastic word was the right one to employ. Scholastic jargon when it merely hides the absence of thought or when merely used to "show off" by the narrow intellect is tasteless and ridiculous. But to deliberately banish the exact and technical style, which alone is capable of expressing certain delicate or deep shades of thought, to do this is to fall into a purism equally unreasonable. Kant and Hegel or even minds as absolutely emancipated from the scholastic traditions as Herder, Schiller and Goethe would, if judged like that, not escape our terrible accusation of pedantry.

We may congratulate our neighbours upon their freedom from all such fetters, which, we are bound to say, would be less hurtful to them than to us. With them the school and science are in touch; with us, every system of higher education, which in its manner, has still the scent of the school about it, is voted "bad form" and unbearable. People think they are showing great subtlety and tact by placing themselves above everything that reminds them of school instruction. Every one indulges in that small

conceit, and fancies he is proving in that way that he has got over his schooling long ago. Does it sound credible to us that in the ceremonies, resembling our distributions of prizes, when with us a display of eloquence is THE THING, the Germans confine themselves to the reading aloud of grammatical dissertations of the severest kind and bristling with Greek and Latin words (49)? Should we be able to understand solemn and public sittings, occupied with the following lectures. "*On the Nature of the Conjunction.*"—"*On the German period.*"—"*On the Greek Mathematicians.*"—"*On the topography of the Battle of Marathon.*"—"*On the plain of Crissa.*"—"*On the centuriæ of Servius Tullius.*"—"*On the Vineyards of Attica.*"—"*Classification of the Prepositions.*"—"*Elucidation of the difficult words in Homer.*"—"*Commentary on the portrait of Thersites in Homer;*" etc.; etc. (50)? All this implies among our neighbours a marvellous taste for the serious, and also perhaps a certain amount of courage in being bored without wincing when etiquette requires it. Madame de Stael says that the Viennese of her time amused themselves methodically and as a matter of conscience. Perhaps the German public may also be more patient than ours when it becomes a question of being bored ceremoniously and by official invitation. It will soon become with us a meritorious act to witness a sitting of the Academy of Inscriptions, though the blame may not be laid at the door of the Academies. Our public is too difficult to please, it wants to be interested and even amused where instruction should suffice; and in fact until one has a conception of the lofty and philosophical aim of science, as long as people will look upon it as a kind of curiosity, like any other curiosity, it will be voted a bore and taxed with the *ennui* it produces. Play for play there is no reason why the least attractive should be chosen.

Montaigne who in many respects is the eminently typical intellect of the Frenchman, represents that

typical intellect above all by his horror of everything that reminds him of pedantry. It is a treat to see him do the "free and easy," the man of the world who understands nothing of science and "knows everything without having ever learned anything."* "All these," he says; "are but so many dreams of a man who has only tasted the upper crust of science in his infancy, and has only retained a general and vague impression of it; a little of everything and nothing at all, in the French fashion. For in sum, I know that there is a science of medicine, of jurisprudence, four parts in mathematics, and roughly at what they aim. And I may perhaps have an inkling of the pretensions of sciences in general with regard to their use in life, but as for having gone deeper into them, as for having bitten my nails to the quick in the study of Aristotle, the king of the modern method, or having obstinately pursued any science at all, I have never done so, there is no art of which I can do more than lay down the first principles. There is not a middle class child, but what may call itself more learned than I, who could not make it go through its first lesson. And if I were compelled to do so, I should be obliged to draw absurdly from said lesson some matter of general import, on which I would examine his natural aptitude; a lesson as utterly unknown to him, as his is to me."

Nevertheless, he takes good care to show that he understands as much about it as any one else, and to reveal such traits of learning as may do credit to his understanding, provided it be taken for granted that he sets no store by them and that he is above such pedantry. He prides himself upon having no memory (*retention*) and "to be a capital hand at forgetting" *excellent en oubliance.* "I have got no store cupboard;" (*Je n'ai pas de gardoire*) he says; "for it is by that that the learned shine." Upon the whole, it is a nice quiet way of snapping his fingers at the virtues of the *savant* in order to raise himself in

* Molière.—TRANSL.

peoples' estimation by those of the man of sense and the man of wit, a way eminently characteristic of the French intellect and which Madame de Stael designates so very cleverly by the name of "the pedantry of thoughtlessness" (51).

CHAPTER VII.

JUST as in the very bosom of religion there are a great many men handling sacred matters without the least idea of their lofty meaning, and only looking at them in the light of vulgar manipulation, so in the field of science there are labourers—very worthy people in the main—often utterly lacking in the sentiment of their work and its value in the furtherance of the ideal. Let us hasten to add that it would be unfair to require of the *savant* the ever immediate consciousness of the aim of his work; it would be bad taste on our part to wish him to speak of it deliberately in and out of season; it would be compelling him to head all his works with the self-same prolegomena. Take the most beautiful scientific works, peruse the works of Letronne, of Burnouf, of Lassen, of Grimm and of the princes of modern criticism generally and perhaps you would seek in vain for a page *directly* and *abstractedly* philosophical. The fact of their authors being thoroughly imbued with the philosophic spirit is made manifest not so much by an isolated flight of rhetoric as by the general spirit and method. Nay, this prudent abstention may often be taken as an act of scientific virtue and the heroes of science are they who, though more capable than no matter whom of indulging in lofty speculation, have the strength of mind to confine themselves to the strict statement of facts and abstaining voluntarily from anticipated generalizations.

Works undertaken without this noble spirit may even powerfully aid in the cultivation of the human intellect irrespective of the more or less paltry intentions of their authors. Is it at all necessary for the marble quarrier to have an idea of the future monument of which the blocks which he quarries will form a part? Among the laborious workers of science who have raised the edifice of science many looked no further than the stone they shaped, or at any rate no further than the limited region where they placed it. Like the ants, they each bring their individual tribute, remove some obstacle, cross one another incessantly, apparently without the slightest attempt at order, and only get in one another's way. Nevertheless, it happens that by the united labour of so many men and without any preconceived plan a science is organized, and organized in noble proportions. An invisible genius has been the architect presiding over the whole and has made all those isolated efforts subservient to a perfect unity.

By studying the origin of each science one will find that the first steps were nearly always taken with no very distinct consciousness, and that among others, philological studies owe a large debt of gratitude to very mediocre intellects, which at the outset laid down their material conditions. Hervas, Paulin de Saint-Barthélemi, Pigafetta who must be considered the founders of linguistic science were certainly not geniuses. What an immense fact in the history of the human intellect is the initiation of the Latin world in the understanding of Greek literature. The two men who contributed most powerfully to it, Barlaam and Léontius Pilatus were according to Petrarch and Boccacio who knew them so very intimately two nonentities who were as surly as they were whimsical. The majority of the Greek emigrants who played so important a part in the development of European intelligence were men of no parts whatsoever, downright labourers who took advantage *per alcuni denari* of their knowledge of

Greek. For every Bessarion there were a hundred Philelphuses. The lexicographers are as a rule not very great philosophers and still the best book on generalities has not had so great an influence on the higher sciences as the dictionary—philosophically an exceedingly poor performance—by which Wilson made the study of Sanskrit possible in Europe. There are works requiring an amount of plodding drudgery to which men impelled by too powerful a craving for philosophical studies would with difficulty submit. Would lofty and energetic minds have succeeded in accomplishing the immense works issued from the scientific workshops of the congregation of St. Maur?* Every scientific work, conducted according to a sound method, keeps its unquestionable value, irrespective of the wider or narrower views of its author. The only useless works are those in which the smatterer or the quack pretends to imitate the bearing of genuine science, and those in which the author, prompted by an interested thought, or by the preconceived dreams of his imagination is bent at all costs upon finding his chimeras everywhere.

Though it is not necessary for the workman to have a perfect knowledge of the work he executes, one could wish those who devote themselves to special labours to have an idea of the whole which alone imparts value to their researches. If the many laborious workers to whom science owes its progress had possessed the philosophical spirit of what they did, if they had perceived in learning something more than the satisfaction of their vanity or curiosity, how many precious moments would have been saved, how many fruitless excursions spared, how many lives given up to insignificant works would have been devoted to more useful researches. When we come to consider that the intellectual labour of whole

* The congregation of St. Maur, a reformed branch of the order of St. Benedict, was founded in France in the seventeenth century and has rightly been called the nursery ground of *savants*.—TRANSL.

centuries, of whole countries, of Spain for instance, has been wasted, for lack of a substantial object in view, that millions of volumes have crumbled to dust without producing the least result, we cannot help regretting deeply this immense loss of human force, brought about by the absence of guidance and for want of a distinct perception of the goal to be reached. The intensely sad impression one feels on entering a library is due mainly to the thought that nine-tenths of the books crowded together there have missed their mark, and whether through the fault of the author himself, or through the fault of circumstances have never had nor will ever have, any direct action on the onward march of humanity.

It seems to me that science will only then recover its dignity when it takes up its definite stand on the grand and wide point of view of its veritable aim. In former days there was room for that trivial and more or less innocuous character of the *savant* of the Restoration, a semi-courtier-like part, the actor of which had a way of allowing himself to be taken for a man of *solid* attainments who tossed his head at ambitious innovations; it was a way of securing the patronage of some Mæcenas, a duke or peer, who as a mark of high favour admitted him in the capacity of a bit of furniture of his drawing-room, or of an antique *curio* of his collection; and in the whole transaction there was nothing deserving the name of serious, there was nothing but the more or less imbecile laughter of vanity, the laughter so terribly aggravating when it presumes to meddle with serious matters. That is the kind of thing which is doomed to disappear for ever more, that is as good as buried together with the playthings of a society in which shams still played so important a part. To entice science from the grandiose midst of humanity in order to make it an idle plaything of a court or a drawing-room is degrading science, for the day is not far distant when everything that is not serious and

true will be ridiculous. Let us, then, be true for Heaven's sake, true like Thales when from his own initiative and impelled from within he took to speculating upon nature, true like Socrates, true like Jesus, genuine like St. Paul, genuine like all those great men which the ideal claimed as its own, took possession of and dragged after it. Let us leave old-world twaddle to plead lukewarmly in apology for science that like everything else, it is a necessity, an ornament, that it confers lustre on a country, etc., etc. All this is so much sheer imbecility. Where is the noble and philosophic soul, eager for perfection, possessing the sentiment of its intrinsic worth that would consent to sacrifice itself to such vanities, that would gladly take up its place in the inanimate tapestry of human nature, to enact in the living world the part of a mummy in a museum. As for myself, I confess frankly that if I could see a form of life more beautiful than that of science, I should run to embrace it. How can one be reconciled to what one knows to be the second-best? How can one consent to put one's self among the waste, to accept a mere part of show when life is so short, when nothing can make up for the moments not devoted to the delights of the ideal? Oh, truth and earnestness of life, oh holy poesy of things, what is there to console us for having no feeling for thee? And to talk for a moment of the serious hour to which everyone must look forward to appreciate things in their true light, who will be able to breathe his last tranquilly, when, in casting a glance backward, he only finds in his life frivolity or gratified curiosity? The end only is worthy of being looked at, the whole rest nothing but vanity. To live does not mean to glide smoothly along a pleasant surface, it does not mean making the world your plaything in the pursuit of your own pleasure; it means to partake of many beautiful things, it means to be the fellow-traveller of the stars; it means knowledge, hope, love, admiration; it means well-doing. He

has lived most and most worthily who by his heart and intellect, by his acts has worshipped most.

Hence, to look at science in the light of a mere satisfaction of vanity or curiosity is as great an error as to consider poetry merely the listless exercise of frivolous minds, or literature the amusement of which one tires least, and to which one comes back most willingly. The collector and the amateur may render signal services to science, but they are neither *savants* nor philosophers. They are as far removed from it as the manufacturer. For they amuse themselves, they pursue their own pleasure just as the manufacturer seeks his profit. I am aware of there being various degrees of curiosity. There is a wide difference between the paltry instinct of the collector which scarcely differs from the attachment of the child to his toys, and the more elevated form when it becomes a love of knowledge, that is; a legitimate instinct of nature and may be productive of a very noble existence. Boyle and Charles Nodier are only mere inquirers, and still they closely trench upon the philosopher. It is very rare, in fact, that with the highest exercise of the intellect there is not mixed up a certain amount of pleasure, which though having no value as far as the ideal is concerned, is none the less useful. It would be difficult to say how many discoveries have been simply due to curiosity. How many compilations, precious in view of ultimate researches would have never been made but for that innocent love of labour with which many mildly active natures cheat their craving. It would be cruel indeed to refuse to those humble workers the trivial and not very lofty pleasure, but sweet withal, which M. Daunou has so well defined as *paperasser*.* We are all more or less glad at having felt the same satisfaction, if for no other reason than because it has helped us to devour the barren pages

* *Paperasser* means both a love of scribbling and of ferreting among documents. Daunou was the author of a remarkable series of Historical Essays; died about 1840.—TRANSL.

of science. Without this the first studies necessary to master the material baggage of a language would be unbearable, and thanks to this they become the most attractive imaginable.

We may go further still and positively affirm that without this attraction the most learned men of modern times who were neither borne up by lofty philosophical views, nor by directly religious motives, would not have undertaken those immense labours which have made the investigations of higher criticism possible to us. He who, with our material wants intensified to a greater pitch, would accomplish a similar act of abnegation to-day, would be a hero. But it is important to maintain for all that, that this curiosity has no immediate moral whatsoever, and that its possession does not constitute the *savant*. There are manufacturers who exploit science for their benefit, the others exploit it for their amusement. No doubt the latter is the better part, but there is not an enormous difference between the two. Pleasure being essentially personal and interested, there is nothing whatsoever sacred or moral about it. All literature, all poesy, all science whose only aim is to amuse or merely to awaken interest is for this very reason frivolous and vain, or to speak correctly, has no right at all to call itself literature, poesy or science. The mountebanks in the streets and elsewhere do as much, and what is more, succeed better. How is it that one considers the perusal of Corneille, Goethe, Byron as a serious occupation, and that the perusal of such and such a modern novel or drama is looked upon as merely a pastime? For the same reason that the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews* are serious periodicals and that the *Magasin Pittoresque* is a frivolous book.

Therefore, to take up science as merely interesting and curious is to humiliate it. In that case Christian asceticism would be perfectly right in its opposition. The sole legitimate means of making one's self the apologist of science is to look upon it as the

essential element to human perfection. "The Imitation of Christ," after having begun like the "master of those who know" with the words; "Every man is naturally desirous to know," was thoroughly right in adding; "But what is the use of science without love? Better by far the humble peasant who serves God, than the proud philosopher who watches the course of the stars and neglects himself. What is the use of the knowledge of things, the ignorance of which will not cause us to be condemned? All is vanity, save the love of God and to serve Him." There is no gainsaying this, if science be conceived as a simple series of formulas, if perfect love be possible without knowledge. If we place perfection on one side, on the other vanity, how can one fail to follow perfection? But it is this very division which is illegitimate, because perfection is impossible without science. The true way of worshipping God, is to know and to love that which is.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of all branches of human knowledge *philology* is the one of which it becomes most difficult to grasp the aim and the unity. Astronomy, zoology, botany have all a determined object in view. But what is that of philology? The grammarian, the linguist, the lexicographer, the *literary man* in the special meaning of the word have, all of them, a right to the title of philologists, and we observe, in fact, between those various studies a connection sufficiently strong to enable us to call them by a common name. In one respect the words philology, philosophy, poesy and a good many others are very much alike; in that their very vagueness is expressive. When after the manner of the logicians we look for a phrase equivalent to those comprehensive words, and which at the same time gives their definition, we become greatly embarrassed because they have neither in their object nor in their method any unique characteristic. Socrates, Diogenes, Pascal, Voltaire are termed philosophers; Homer, Aristophanes, Lucretius, Martial, Chaulieu and Lamartine are termed poets, but it is not easy to find the family link which unites minds so utterly different under the same name. Such appellations have not been coined according to preconceived and clearly defined notions; they owe their origin to a process less fettered in its application and upon the whole more exact than that of artificial logic. These words designate regions of the human intellect between which we must be careful

not to trace lines of demarcation too hard and fast. Where does eloquence end, where does poetry commence (52)? Is Plato a poet, is he a philosopher? Puerile questions, these, no doubt, seeing that whatsoever name we give him he will be none the less admirable, and that genius does not work in the exclusive categories which language coins afterwards, and on the strength of his work. The whole difference lies in a peculiar harmony, in a more or less sonorous ring with regard to which an experienced faculty never hesitates.

Antiquity, wiser in this respect and less distantly removed from the origin of these words, was less embarrassed in their application. The very complex sense of its word *grammar* did not cause it the least hesitation. Since we have drawn up a map of science as it were we persist in assigning to philology, to philosophy each a place apart; and yet they are less special sciences than different ways of treating things intellectual.

At a time when the first question asked of the *savant* refers to the nature of his studies, and the results attained, philology can but find small favour. One understands the physicist, the student of chemistry, the astronomer; the philosopher is less well understood, and the philologist still less. The majority, wrongly interpreting the etymology of his name imagine that he only works on words (and what, say they, could be more frivolous?) and never dream of distinguishing like Zeno the *philologist* from the *logophile* (53). The vague cloud that hangs over the object of his studies, that *sporadic* character as the Germans call it, that almost undefined latitude which embraces so many divers researches under the same name is apt to make one believe that he is only an amateur, who flits about amidst the variety of his works, and undertakes exploring expeditions into the past just as certain burrowing animals construct subterranean passages for the mere pleasure of constructing them. His place in the philosophical

organization is as yet not sufficiently defined, his monographs keep on accumulating without any one perceiving their purport.

Philology, in fact, seems at the first glance only to offer an *ensemble* of studies without any scientific unity. Everything that contributes to restore or to illustrate the past has the right to a place in it. Understood in its etymological meaning it should only include grammar, exegesis and criticism of texts. Works of pure learning, of archæology, of æsthetic criticism should be excluded from it. But such exclusion would, however, not be natural at all. For there is the closest connection between these labours, they form, as a rule, part of the studies of the same individual, very often of the same work. To eliminate some of these from the ensemble of philological labours, would be to make an artificial and arbitrary scission in a natural group. Let us take, for instance, the school of Alexandria; a few philosophical and theurgical speculations apart, are not all the labours of that school, even those which do not come directly under the head of philology, stamped with the same spirit, which one may call philological, a spirit it carries even into poetry and philosophy? Would a history of philology be complete if it made no mention of Apollonius of Rhodes, of Apollodorus, of Ælian, of Diogenes Laertius, of Athenæus and other polygraphists, whose works are, however, far from being philological, even in the most restricted meaning? If, on the other hand, we grant to philology its widest possible extension, where are we to stop? If we do not look out, we shall be forcibly brought to include nearly the whole of the literature of thought into it. Historians, critics, polygraphists, the writers of literary history will have to find a place in it (54). Such is the drawback, grave no doubt, but necessary withal and compensated for by great advantages, of separating in that way a group of ideas, belonging to the ensemble of the human intellect and to which it clings with every one of its fibres. Let us add that

the bearing of words changes with the revolution of things and that in the appreciation of their meaning we should only be guided by their central notions, without trying to imprison those notions in formulas which are never their perfect equivalents. When it becomes a question of ancient literature, criticism and erudition enter by right into the framework of philology; on the other hand the historian of modern philology will not deem it incumbent upon him to speak of our grand collections of civil and literary history, nor of those brilliant works of æsthetic criticism that have attained the level of the noblest philosophical creations (55).

Therefore, the field of the philologist can no more be defined than that of the philosopher, for both in fact are occupied not with a distinct object, but with all things from a special standpoint. The true philologist must be at once a linguist, a historian, an archæologist, an artist and a philosopher. Everything assumes to him a meaning and a value, in view of the object he sets himself, and which renders serious the most frivolous things distantly or closely connected with it. Those who like Heyne and Wolf have confined the rôle of the philologist to the reproduction in its purely scientific domain, and as in a living library, of every trait of the ancient world (56), do not appear to have understood the full extent of their range. The aim of philology does not lie within itself; it has its value as a necessary condition of the history of the human intellect and the study of the past. No doubt a good many philologists whose learned studies have thrown open antiquity to us, saw no further than the text they interpreted and around which they grouped the myriad spangles of their brilliant learning. In this, as in every other science, the natural curiosity of the human intellect coming to the aid of the philosophical spirit and supporting the patience of investigators has no doubt had its use.

A great many people feel inclined to laugh when

they find grave intellects take an enormous deal of trouble in explaining grammatical peculiarities, collect glossaries, compare the *variorum* editions of some ancient author whose only claim to notice often lies in his oddity or mediocrity. All this arises through not having understood in a sufficiently wide sense the history of the human intellect and the study of the past. Human intelligence after having traversed a certain space likes to retrace its steps to behold once more the road along which it has travelled, to chew the cud of its own thoughts. The first creators did not look behind them, they marched onward, without any other guide than the eternal principles of human nature. But, on the other hand, humanity reaches a certain stage, when books have sufficiently accumulated to be collected and compared, and then the mind will only proceed with a full knowledge of facts; it wants to confront its work with that of bygone ages; that day witnesses the birth of the literature of thought, and parallel with it, the birth of philology. The apparition, therefore, is not, as has been said, a sign of the death of various literatures, it merely bears witness to their having accomplished already *one life*. Greek literature was manifestly not dead in the age of the Pisistratidæ when the philological spirit shows itself already so characteristic. In the Latin and French literatures, the philological spirit was the forerunner of the grand productive epochs. China, India, Arabia, Syria, Greece, Rome, the modern nations have all known the moment when the labour of the intellect from being spontaneous becomes scientific and no longer proceeds without consulting the archives deposited in museums and libraries. The development of the Hebrew people itself which previous to Christ appears to offer less trace than any other of intellectual activity, shows in its decline perceptible vestiges of that spirit of comparison, of collecting, of "patching up" if I may so call it, which terminates the original life of all literatures.

These considerations would, it appears to me, be sufficient as an apology for the philological sciences. Nevertheless, they are, in my opinion, very secondary indeed, when we come to consider the new position which the development of contemporary philosophy ought to grant to these studies. It wants but one step more for science to be proclaimed the true philosophy of humanity, and the science of a being who is in a perpetual condition of "to be" can only be the history of that being. The history of the human intellect not merely inquisitive but theoretical, that is the philosophy of the nineteenth century.

And it so happens that this study is only possible through the direct study of monuments, and that those monuments "cannot be got at" without the special researches of the philologist. Certain forms of the past are each in itself sufficient to occupy a laborious existence. An ancient language, often utterly unknown, an isolated palæography, an archæology and a history painfully deciphered, each of these is assuredly more than enough to engross all the efforts of the most patient investigator, unless humbler workers have given protracted labour to the digging from the quarry and to the presentation in an aggregate for his appreciation of the materials with which he is to reconstruct the edifice of the past (57). In the opinion of posterity, such and such a ponderous, mediocre, but patient intellect, who has contributed one important stone to this gigantic work will perhaps occupy a loftier standpoint than such and such a speculative mind of secondary order, who called himself a philosopher and who did nothing but talk about the problem, without providing a single new datum to its solution. The revolution which since 1820 has completely changed the aspect of historical studies, or which, to speak more correctly has really founded the science of history among us, is obviously as important a fact as the apparition of a new system. Well; would the works of a Guizot, a Thierry, a Michelet, works so full of originality, would they

have been possible without the Benedictine collections and other preparatory labours? Mabillon, Muratori, Baluze, Du Cange were not great philosophers, and still they have done more for true philosophy than a good many empty and systematic minds who wanted to build the fabric of things on air, and of whom not a single syllable will remain among our final acquisitions. I am not alluding here to works in which the most solid learning is wedded to a subtle or lofty criticism, such as for instance the last volumes of "L'histoire litteraire de la France" "L'Essai sur le Buddhisme" of M. Eugène Burnouf, "L'Archéologie Indienne" of M. Lassen, "La Grammaire Comparée" of M. Bopp, or "Les Religions de l'Antiquité" of M. Guigniaut. As for myself I have no hesitation in saying that I have got more things philosophical out of each one of these works than from the whole of the collected works of Descartes and of his school. But I am speaking of those works of a severer character which the profane consider as unreadable, such as for instance; Catalogues of Manuscripts, grand compilations, "Libraries" like that of Fabricus, etc.; etc. Well I maintain that such books, almost insignificant in themselves, have a priceless value if looked upon as materials for the history of the human intellect. Ten thousand volumes of philosophy like the "Lessons" of La Romiguière or the "Logique" of Port-Royal might burn before my eyes, and I should prefer to save "La Bibliothèque Orientale" of Assemani or the "Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispana" of Casiri. For philosophy always benefits by taking up things *ab integro*, and after all the philosopher can always say; "*Omnia mecum porto;*" whereas the noblest genius in the world could not restore to me the documents in those collections bearing upon Syriac and Arabic literature, two very secondary facets, no doubt, but still, two facets of the human intellect.

It is very easy to ridicule those attempts at restoring obscure literatures, often of but mediocre value. The error arises from the fact of not under-

standing the whole extent, the infinite variety of the science of the human intellect. A learned disciple of M. Burnouf, M. Foucaux has for the last few years tried to introduce into France the study of Thibetic. I should not be surprised in the least but that his praiseworthy enterprise has already caused many an epigram to be flung at him; well I declare, I, that M. Foucaux is doing more meritorious work with regard to the philosophy of the future than three fourths of those who claim the position of philosophers and thinkers. When Mr. Hodgson discovered in the monasteries of Nepaul the primitive monuments of Indian Buddhism, he did greater service to thought than a generation of scholastic metaphysicians could have done. He provided one of the most essential elements to the explanation of the Gospel and Christianity by revealing to criticism one of the most curious religious apparitions and the only fact possessing a close analogy to the grandest phenomenon in the history of humanity. He who should bring us back from the East a few works in Zend or Pehlvi, who should make known to Europe the epic poems and the whole of the civilization of the Rajpoots, who should make his way into the libraries of the Djains of Guzerat, who should give us an exact knowledge of the books of the Gnostic sect which is still being preserved under the name of Meudeans or Nasoreans, he who should do all this would be certain to have contributed an imperishable stone to the grand fabric of the science of humanity. Where is the abstract thinker who can make sure of a similar satisfaction?

Hence, it is in philosophy that we must look for the real value of philology. Each branch of human knowledge has its special results which it brings as a tribute to the general science of things and to universal criticism, one of the first needs of thinking man. Herein lies the dignity of all special research and of the last details of learning which have no meaning for the frivolous and light-minded. Looked

at in this light, there is no such a thing as trivial or useless research. There is no study, however unimportant its object may seem, but what brings its ray of light to the science of the whole, to the true philosophy of the realities. The general results which alone, we are bound to admit, have a value in themselves, and are the *final aim* of science, become only possible by the *means* of knowledge, and of learned knowledge of details. We go further still and say that the general results not based on the knowledge of the latest details are necessarily hollow and artificial; whereas special researches, even if destitute of the philosophical spirit may be of the greatest value if they are exact and conducted according to a severe method. The spirit of science is that intellectual communion which links the scholar to the thinker, gives to each his deserved glory and establishes the point of convergence at which their several labours meet at last.

The union of philology and philosophy, of learning and thought should, therefore, be the characteristic of the intellectual labour of our age. It is either philology or learning which will provide the thinker with that forest of things (*silva rerum ac sententiarum*, as Cicero has it) without which philosophy will never be aught else than a Penelope web which will constantly have to be recommenced. We must once for all abandon the attempt of the old school, to construct the theory of things by the play of formulas void of all spirit, just as if by manipulating the shuttle of the weaver without putting thread into it, we should pretend to manufacture linen, or by setting a mill into motion without providing corn we should expect to get flour. The thinker implies the scholar; and if it were only for the sake of the severe training of the mind, I should set very little store by the philosopher who had not for once in his life worked at the elucidation of some special point of science. No doubt the rôles may be divided and such division is often desirable. But there should be at any rate

a close commerce between these various functions, the works of the scholar should no longer remain buried among the mass of learned collections, where for all the good they do, they might just as well not exist at all; the philosopher on the other hand should no longer insist upon evolving from his own consciousness the vital truths of which the sciences outside possess such enormous wealth for him who explores them intelligently and critically.

Whence come so many novel views on the progress of the different literatures and the human intellect, on spontaneous poetry, on the primitive ages, unless they have sprung from the patient study of barren detail? Would Vico, Wolf, Niebuhr and Strauss have been able to endow thought with so many new views, without the possession of most minute erudition? What if not erudition, has opened to us the worlds of the East, the knowledge of which has made possible to us the comparative science of the developments of the human intellect? Why is one of the noblest geniuses of modern times, Herder, so frequently inexact, chimerical, inaccurate in his treatise on the "Poetry of the Hebrews," in which he has put forth all his soul, unless it be because he failed to support that admirable æsthetic sense with which he was gifted by scientific criticism? From this point of view the study even of the follies of the intellect has its value as regards history and psychology. Many important problems of historical criticism will not be solved until an "intelligent" scholar shall have devoted his life to the dissection of the Talmud and the Cabbala. If Montesquieu in classifying the laws of the Ripuarians, Visigoths and the primitive Burgundians was justified in comparing himself to Saturn devouring stones, what will have to be the strength of the mind capable of digesting such a farrago? And still, there might be extracted from it a number of data exceeding valuable to the history of comparative religion.

Ever since the fifteenth century the sciences having for their object the human intellect and its works have made no discovery to be compared to that which has revealed to us in India an intellectual world of marvellous wealth, variety and depth, in one word, another Europe. If we review our most settled ideas in comparative literature, in linguistic knowledge, in ethnography, in criticism we shall find the whole of them stamped and modified by this grand and capital discovery. As far as I am concerned, I find few elements of my thoughts whose roots are not deeply planted in that sacred ground, and I aver that no philosophical creation has furnished so many living parts to modern science as this patient restoration of a world the existence of which was not so much as suspected. Here then we meet with a series of essential results introduced into the current of the human intellect by philologists, and scholars, men by whom the partisans of the *a priori* would no doubt set little store. What then will it be when this mine, scarcely touched, shall have been worked in every direction? What will it be when every nook and corner of the human intellect shall have been explored and compared in a like way? And philology alone is capable of accomplishing this task. Anquetil-Duperron was undoubtedly a patient and zealous student. Why did all his works have to be "propped up" as it were and radically reformed? Because he was not a philologist.

One might fancy that the very fact of summoning erudition to renewed intellectual activity implies its being exhausted and that we are assimilating our century to those epochs when literature, no longer capable of producing anything original, becomes critical and retrospective. There would be no doubt of this, if our erudition were nothing more than a dead and meaningless letter, if like some narrow intellects we looked for nothing else in the knowledge and admiration of the works of the past than the pedantic right of despising the works of the

present. But in addition to our creations being more spirited than those of the ancients, and apart from the fact of every modern nation possessing sufficient sap for two or three engrafted literatures, our manner of conceiving philology is very much more philosophical and fruitful than that of antiquity. Philology is not with us, as in the school of Alexandria, the mere curiosity of the erudite man; it is an organized science having a lofty and serious aim; it is the *science of the productions of the human intellect.* I am not afraid of exaggerating in saying that philology inseparably bound up with criticism is one of the most essential elements of the modern spirit, that without philology the modern world would not be what it is, and that philology constituted the vast difference between the Middle Ages and modern times. If we surpass the Middle Ages in clearness, in precision, in criticism, it is due solely to philological education.

The Middle Ages worked as much as we do, the Middle Ages produced intellects, as active, as penetrating as ours; the Middle Ages had their philosophers, their savants, their poets; but it had no philologists (58); hence that lack of criticism which reduced them to the condition of intellectual infancy. Impelled towards antiquity by that urgent need which impels all the neo-Latin nations towards their intellectual origin, it was unable to get at the truth for want of the necessary instrument (59). There were as many Latin authors and as few Greek authors in the West at the time of Vincent of Beauvais as at the time of Petrarch. And yet Vincent of Beauvais knows nothing of antiquity, he possesses only a few insignificant and detached scraps of it, lacking coherent sense, constituting no spirit. Petrarch, on the other hand, who as yet has not read Homer, but who has a manuscript of him in the original language, who worships him without understanding him (60), has instinctively guessed the spirit of antiquity; he himself has its spirit to a degree as eminent as any

savant of the subsequent centuries; he understands with his soul that which he cannot grasp literally, his enthusiasm is aroused by an ideal, the worth of which he can only surmise. It is because the philological spirit makes its first appearance in him. That is why he should be considered the founder of the modern spirit in criticism and literature. He is the landmark between inexact fragmentary and mere material knowledge, and comparative, delicate and in one word, critical knowledge. Is the faulty understanding of the philosophy of the ancients by the Middle Ages, for instance, to be attributed to insufficient study? Who would dare to affirm such a thing of the century that produced the vast commentaries of an Albertus Magnus, of a Thomas Aquinas? Is it for lack of sufficient documents? Not at all. It had the complete materials of the Peripatetic philosophy, that is, the philosophical encyclopædia of antiquity; it had furthermore numerous documents on Platonism, and had the works of Cicero, Seneca, Macrobius, of Chalcidius, and the commentaries on Aristotle afforded it almost as much information on the philosophy of the ancients as we ourselves possess. What then did they lack, those laborious workers who devoted so many vigils to that deep study? They lacked that which the Renaissance possessed; philology. If instead of wasting their lives on barbarous translations and second-hand works, the scholastic commentators had mastered Greek and read in the original text, Aristotle, Plato, Alexander Aphrodisiensis, the fifteenth century would have been spared the spectacle of the war between two Aristotles, the one left solitary and forgotten in his original pages, the other artificially created by successive and scarcely perceptible deviations from the primitive text. The original texts of a literature are its true and complete presentment. Translations and second-hand renderings are enfeebled copies and always leave gaps which the imagination takes upon itself to fill up. In pro-

portion to the copies belonging to a period removed from the original and getting reproduced in still more imperfect copies, the gaps increase, conjectures become multiplied and the true colour of things vanishes. The classical translations of the sixteenth century were to antiquity, as the Aristotle and the Galen of the Faculties, for which pupils and professors were referred to the traditional class books, to the real Aristotle, to the real Galen, as Greek culture to the insignificant fragments collected after other compilers by Martinus Capella or Isidore of Seville. It is neither original production nor the inquiring interest into the past, nor the perseverance to work that the Middle Ages lack. The *literati* of the Renaissance were superior neither in penetration nor in application to an Alcuin, an Allain of Lille, an Alexander of Hales, a Roger Bacon. But they were more critical, they enjoyed the advantages of the progress made in their times and of the knowledge acquired, they benefited by the favourable circumstances which successive events had brought about. It has been the fate of philology as well as of every other science to be inseparably linked to the march of things, and to be unable to accelerate by a single day by the effort of its own will the progress to be accomplished.

This ἀκρισία then may be taken as the general character of the knowledge of antiquity in the Middle Ages, or to be more exact, of the whole intellectual condition of that period. Politics as well as literature had its share of it. Those fictions of *kings*, of *patricians*, of *emperors*, of *Cæsars*, of *Augustuses*, transferred to rank barbarism; those legends of Brut, of Francus, the opinion that all authority must necessarily date back to the Roman Empire, as all high nobility to Troy, the way of looking upon Roman law as absolute law, Greek knowledge as absolute knowledge, whence did all this come, if not from the rough "guesswork knowledge" of antiquity, from the semi-fantastic light by which that ancient world

was viewed, that ancient world to which they aspired to link themselves? The modern spirit, that is, rationalism, criticism, liberalism, was founded on the same day that philology was founded. *The founders of the modern spirit are the philologists.*

Philology constitutes also one of the claims to superiority of the moderns over the ancients. Antiquity can show no noble type of philological philosopher in the style of Humboldt, Lessing, Fauriel. If some Alexandrian like Porphyrus and Longinus happen to add philology to philosophy, the two realms with them scarcely touch one another; philology does not beget philosophy; philosophy is not philological. What are Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Aristarchus, Aphtonius, Macrobius compared to those subtle and excellent intellects which from a certain point of view constitute the philosophers of the nineteenth century (61)? What are questions like the following: "Why did Homer begin the catalogue of the ships with those of the Boeotians?" "How could the head of Medusa be at one and the selfsame time in the nether regions and on the shield of a God?" "How many rowers had Ulysses?" What are questions like these and other *problems* that supplied the subjects for the wrangling of the schools of Alexandria and Pergamos, when compared to the ingenious, comprehensive and delicate way of examining every aspect of things, of culling the essence of every subject, of strolling through a corner of "the universal" like a many-sided observer, which nowadays we call criticism? Such inferiority is, after all, easy to explain. The ancients lacked the means of comparison; wherever they had sufficiently authentic documents at hand, as in the Homeric question, they left little for us to do, except in the higher criticism to which the comparison of the different literatures is indispensable. That is why their grammar is above all defective, because they only know their own language, and special grammatical systems derive their life from general gram-

mar, and general grammar presupposes a comparison of idioms. The ancients were equal to the modern philologists most enamoured of their subjects in the minuteness of their details and the patience of their comparisons. As for the criticism of texts, their position was far different to ours. They had no inventory of manuscripts of acknowledged authority and settled once for all to guide them, as we have. Hence they were compelled to think less than we do, of comparing and counting them. Aulus Gellius, for instance, in the critical discussions in which he frequently indulges argues nearly always *a priori* and appeals very seldom to the authority of ancient copies. Cicero said that Aristarchus rejected as interpolations such verses of Homer as did not please him (62). The imperfection of lexicography, the infant state of linguistic knowledge caused a great deal of uncertainty with regard to the exegesis of archaic texts. At the philological epoch the ancient tongue had already become a learned idiom, requiring special study, almost like the literal language of the far East, and it is not surprising that the moderns should often censure the interpretations of the ancient philologists, for they were scarcely more competent than we are as regards the scientific theory of their own language, and we have unquestionably hermeneutical means at our disposal which they had not (63). The ancients, in fact, knew no language but their own and only the classical and settled form of that language.

But the inferiority of antiquity was above all perceptible in erudition. The want of elementary books, of manuals containing common and ordinary notions (64), of biographical, historical and geographical dictionaries, etc., threw back everyone upon his own researches, and multiplied errors even with the most skilful writers (65). Where should we be, if in order to learn history or geography, we were reduced to the scattered facts to be picked up in books that do not treat of such science *ex professo?* The paucity

of books, the absence of indexes and concordances which so greatly facilitate our researches often compelled them to quote from memory, that is, in a very inaccurate manner. And last of all, the ancients had not the experience of a tolerably great number of literary revolutions to fall back upon; they could not compare sufficiently many literatures to soar very high in æsthetic criticism. Let us remember that our superiority in that way only dates from a few years back. In this respect the ancients were exactly on the level of our seventeenth century. When one reads the *opuscula* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Plato, on Thucydides, on the style of Demosthenes, one might well fancy to be reading the "Memoirs" of M. and of Madame Dacier and other worthy *savants* which fill up the first volumes of the Transactions of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.* What artificiality, what puerility do not we meet with even in the "Treatise of the Sublime" itself, that is, in the best critical work of antiquity, a work that we may compare with the productions of the French school of the eighteenth century (66)? Perhaps the very ages that know best how to produce the beautiful may know least how to give its theory. Nothing could be more insipid than what Racine and Corneille have left us in the way of criticism. One is tempted to say that they did not understand the beauties of their own works.

To appreciate the value of philology we should not ask ourselves what is the worth of this or that obscure monograph, this or that note which the scholar crams in at the bottom of a page of his favourite author; we have as much right to inquire about the use in natural history of this or that monograph on a certain variety lost among fifty thousand species of insects. We must consider the revolution philology has wrought; we must examine what the human intellect was before the advent of philological culture, what it has become since it has felt the influence of this culture; what changes the critical

understanding of antiquity has wrought in the manner of inquiring practised by modern students. And, it seems to me that a carefully written history of the human intellect from the fifteenth century onwards would show that the most important revolutions of thought have been brought about by the men whom we should call *littérateurs* or philologists. At any rate there can be no doubt that such men have had a more direct influence than those properly called philosophers. When posterity shall regulate the ranks in the Pantheon of humanity according to the influence brought to bear on the progress of things, the names of Petrarch, of Voltaire, of Rousseau, of Lamartine will no doubt take precedence of those of Descartes and Kant. The first reformers, Luther, Melanchthon, Eobanus Hessus, Calvin, all the abettors of the Reformation, Erasmus, the Etiennes were philologists, the Reformation was born when philology was in full swing. The eighteenth century, though superficial in erudition gets at its results much more by criticism, history and positive science than by metaphysical abstraction (67). Universal criticism is the only characteristic one can assign to the delicate, fleeting, undefinable thought of the nineteenth century. By what name shall we call so many chosen intellects which without abstractedly dogmatizing have shown thought a new way of exercising itself in the world of facts? Let us take M. Cousin himself; is he a philosopher? No; he is a critic who devotes himself to philosophy, as another devotes himself to history and another again to what we call literature. *Criticism*, then, is the form, in which in every field, the human intellect tends to exercise its faculties; and if criticism and philology are not identical, they are at least inseparable. To criticize is to assume the position of a spectator and a judge amidst the variety of things; and philology is the interpreter of things, the means of entering into communication with them and of understanding their language. The day that philo-

logy should perish, criticism would perish with it, barbarism would be born again, credulity would be once more the mistress of the world.

That immense mission which philology has undertaken in the development of the modern spirit is far from accomplished; it is perhaps only at its beginning. Has rationalism which is the general result of the whole of philological culture penetrated among the masses of mankind? Strange beliefs, which cause the critical sense to revolt, are not they gulped down like water even by distinguished intellects? Is there a widespread sense of psychological laws, or at any rate does it sufficiently influence the turn of thought or ordinary speech? The sane view of things, which is not the result of an argument, but of an entire system of critical culture, of a complete intellectual training, is it the view accepted by the greatest number? The mission of philology is to accomplish this task in concert with the physical sciences. To dissipate the mist which envelops the world of thought as well as that of nature to the ignorant, to substitute for the fantastic imaginations of the primitive dream, the clear perceptions of the scientific age, that is the common goal to which those two orders of research so powerfully converge. *Nature* is the word in which they are summed up. I repeat, all this is not the outcome of an isolated demonstration; all this is the result of a clear and unbiassed glance cast at the world, of the intellectual habits begotten of modern methods. Two roads, which make but one, lead to the direct and pragmatic knowledge of things; the physical sciences to that of the physical world, the science of mental facts to that of the intellectual world. And for this science I can find no other name than that of philology. All supernaturalism will receive its death-blow from philology. The supernatural only holds its ground in France because France is not philological.

When I question myself with regard to the most important and the most definitely acquired articles

of my scientific creed, I place in the front rank my ideas on the constitution and the mode of government of the universe, on the essence of life, its development and phenomenal nature, on the substantial foundation of all things and its everlasting delimitation in transient forms, on the apparition of humanity, the primitive facts of its history, the laws of its progress, its aim and its end, on the meaning and the value of things æsthetic and moral, on the right of every living being to light and the attainment of the perfect, on the eternal beauty of human nature expanding at every point of space and on the duration of immortal poems (religion, art, temples, myths, virtues, science, philosophy, etc.), in short on the divine part which is in everything, which constitutes the right to existence and which suitably brought to light, constitutes the beautiful. Is it by reading this or that philosopher that I have formulated to myself things in this way? Is it by the *a priori* hypothesis? No; it is by the universal experimentalizing of life,—it is by pushing forward my thoughts in all directions, in scouring every tract, in analyzing and digging deeply into all things, in watching the successive development of the waves of that eternal ocean, in casting a friendly and inquisitive glance here and there. I am convinced of owing everything to experiment; but it is impossible for me to say by which road I arrived at it, out of what elements I have composed this whole (which, no doubt, may possess very little value, but which after all is my life). A balancing of all things, an inmost tissue, a vast equation of which the variable quantity constantly oscillates owing to the accession of new data, such are the images by which I endeavour to represent to myself the fact, without being satisfied. I feel that I have benefited as much in the formation of my general conception of things by the study of Hebrew or Sanskrit as by the reading of Plato; by the perusal of the poem of Job or the Gospel, of Revelations or of a Moallaca, of the

Baghavat-Gita or the Koran, as by Leibnitz, Hegel, Goethe or Lamartine. Nevertheless, it is neither Manu nor Kulluku-Bhatta, Antar nor Beidhawi; it is not the knowledge of the *sheva* and the *virama*, of the *Kal* and the *Niphal*, of the *Parasmaipadam* and the *Attmanépadam* that has given me my philosophy. But it is the general and critical view, it is the universal induction; and I feel that, if I had ten human lives to live in parallel, so as to be able to explore all the worlds, I being there in the centre, sniffing the perfume of all things, judging and comparing, combining and inducting, I should get at the system of things (68). Well, that which no individual can accomplish, humanity will accomplish; for it is immortal, and everyone works for it. Humanity will succeed in *fathoming the true physiognomy of things*, that is; the truth in all order of things. And who, after that, will dare to say that those who have contributed to that immense work, who shall have polished one of the facets of that diamond, who shall have removed a particle of the dross that dims its native brilliancy, are only pedants, idlers, ponderous intellects who waste their time, and who being unfit to carve their way in the world of the living took refuge in that of mummies and graveyards.

To philosophize is to know things; it is according to the beautiful phrase of Cuvier, *to instruct the world in theory*. I believe with Kant that every purely speculative demonstration has no more value than a mathematical demonstration and can teach us nothing with regard to existing reality. Philology (69) is the *exact science* of things intellectual. It is to the sciences of humanity as physics and chemistry to the philosophical science of matter.

This has not been sufficiently understood by an intellect otherwise eminent by its originality and its honourable independence; M. Auguste Comte. It is strange that a man, above all preoccupied with the method of the physical sciences and aspiring to transfer this method to the other branches of human

knowledge, should have conceived in the narrowest fashion the science of the human intellect and of humanity and should have applied to it the coarsest method.

M. Comte has failed to understand the infinite variety of this shifting, capricious, multiple, undefinable material, which is human nature. Psychology is to him an aimless science; the distinction between psychological and physiological facts, the contemplation of the mind by itself an illusion. *Sociology* is the summary of all the sciences of humanity, and sociology to him is not the earnest and patient ascertainment of all the facts of human nature; sociology is not (I am quoting M. Comte's own words) that *incoherent compilation* of facts which we call history and over which presides the most radical irrationalism. It merely borrows examples from this indigestible compilation after which it sets to work on its own account without paying heed to *literary knowledge*, considered as very useless. Hence, M. Comte's method with regard to the sciences of humanity is the purely *a priori* one (70). M. Comte, instead of following the infinitely flexible lines of human societies, their offshoots, their apparent whimsicalities, instead of calculating the definite resultant of this immense oscillation aspires from the very first to a simplicity which the laws of humanity present even to a less degree than the laws of the physical world. M. Comte proceeds exactly like the hypothetic naturalists who forcibly reduce to the straight line the numerous ramifications of the animal world. When he has tried to prove that the human intellect proceeds from theology to metaphysics and from metaphysics to positive science his task as far as the tracing of the history of humanity goes is virtually at an end. Morality, poetry, religion, mythology, all these occupy no place whatsoever in his system, all these are pure fantasy without the least value. If human nature were such as it is conceived by M. Comte, every noble soul would hasten to commit

suicide; it would not be worth while wasting one's time to turn the handle of such an insignificant piece of mechanism. True, M. Comte believes with us that one day science will endow humanity with a creed; but the science in his "mind's eye" is that of Galileo, of Newton, of Descartes, remaining as it is. On that day, the Gospel, poetry would be superfluous. M. Comte thinks that man lives exclusively upon science; nay, upon little scraps of phrases, like the theorems of geometry, barren formulas. Unfortunately for M. Comte he has a system and he does not take up a sufficiently commanding standpoint on the field of the human intellect, open to every breeze that blows. To pretend to write the history of the human mind, one must have very extensive literary attainments. The laws in this instance being of a very delicate nature and not presenting themselves broadside, the faculty most essential is that of the literary critic, of the delicate turn (it is generally the *turn* which expresses most), the subtlety of perception, in short, the very reverse of the geometrical spirit. What would M. Comte think of a physicist who should be content to observe in the aggregate the physiognomy of natural facts, of the student of chemistry who should neglect the theory of equilibrium? And does not he commit a similar error when he proclaims as useless all those patient explorations in the past, when he declares it to be a waste of time to study those centres of civilization which have no direct connection with ours, when he says that it is only necessary to study Europe in order to determine the law of the human mind and then to apply this law *a priori* to the other developments? In this M. Comte is much more influenced than he thinks by the old historical theory of the *Four Empires*, the germ of which may be found in the non-canonical book of Daniel (71), and which since the days of Bossuet has been the foundation of Catholic teaching. He imagines that humanity has really traversed the three conditions of

fetichism, of polytheism, of monotheism, that the first men were cannibals, like the savages, etc. As it happens, this is not to be admitted for a moment. The fathers of the Semitic race had from their origin a secret tendency to monotheism; the Vedas, those matchless songs, really afford the ideas of the original aspirations of the Indo-Germanic race. Among these races, morality dates from the very first beginnings. In one word, M. Comte fails utterly to understand the sciences of humanity, because he is not a philologist.

M. Proudhon, though receptive to every idea, on account of the extreme pliability of his mind and capable of understanding in turns the most diverse aspects of things, does not seem to me to have conceived science in a sufficiently broad manner. No one better than he has understood that science alone is henceforth *possible*, but his science is neither poetic nor religious; it is too exclusively abstract and logical. M. Proudhon is as yet not sufficiently emancipated from the scholasticism of the seminary; he argues a great deal, he does not appear to have understood sufficiently that in the sciences of humanity, logical argumentation means nothing and that delicate mental perception means everything. Argumentation is only possible in a science like geometry, where the principles are plain and absolutely true, without any restriction. But this is not the case in the moral sciences where the principles are only of a "more or less" character, imperfect expressions, founded more or less, but never "in full," on the truth. In this instance the light thrown on to the idea is the only possible demonstration. The form, the style are three-fourths of the idea; and this is not an abuse of the idea as some puritans pretend. Those who inveigh against the style and beauty of form in philosophical and moral science strangely misconceive the true nature of the results of those sciences and the delicate nature of their principles. In geometry, in algebra, a man may

fearlessly abandon himself to the play of formulas, without worrying himself, in the course of the argument, as to the realities which they represent. In the moral sciences, on the contrary, it is never allowed to trust one's self in that way to formulas, to combine them indefinitely as did the old theology, being certain that the result emanating from it, must be strictly true. It will only be logically true and may not even be as true as the principles; for the consequence may happen to bear solely on some error or misunderstanding that was in the principles, but sufficiently hidden to make the principle acceptable. Hence, it may happen that while arguing very logically, a man may arrive, in the moral sciences, at consequences absolutely false, though he started from principles sufficiently true. The books written to defend property *by argument* are as bad as those that attack it by the same method. The truth is, that argument in that order of things should not be listened to, that the results of reasoning in that instance are only legitimate on the condition of being controlled at each step by immediate experience. And whenever we are led by logic to extreme consequences, we should not be frightened at them, for the facts "delicately perceived" are in that instance, the sole *criterion* of the truth.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT then is the meaning of this superficial and idle contempt? Why is the philologist, manipulating as he does, things human in order to extract from them the science of humanity, less understood than the student of chemistry and the physicist, manipulating nature, in order to get at the theory of nature? No doubt the existence of the curious man of erudition who has spent his life in amusing himself learnedly and in treating serious things frivolously has been a profitless existence indeed. Men and women of the world are not altogether wrong in looking upon such a rôle as a mere clever trick of memory, suited to those who have only been endowed with second rate qualities. But theirs is a short and narrow view, in that they fail to perceive that the knowledge of many arts and sciences is the condition of the high æsthetic, moral, religious, poetical intelligence. A philosopher who thinks that he can evolve everything from his own bosom, that is, from the study of the soul and from purely abstract consideration must necessarily despise erudition and look upon it as prejudicial to the progress of reason. From this point of view, the fretful temper of Descartes, of Malebranche and of the Cartesians in general with regard to erudition is legitimate and accounted for by reason. Leibnitz was the first to realize in a magnificent harmony that elevated conception of a *critical philosopher* to which Bayle could not attain through insufficient

concentration of mind. The nineteenth century is destined to be called upon to realize it and to introduce the positive method in every branch of knowledge. M. Cousin's glory will lie in his having proclaimed criticism as a new method in philosophy, a method which may lead to results as dogmatic as abstract speculation. His eclecticism has only lost its strength when outward necessities, which he could not resist, have compelled it to embrace exclusively particular doctrines which have made it as narrow as they themselves are, and to screen itself behind certain names, which should be honoured otherwise than by fanaticism. Such was not the grand eclecticism of 1828 and 1829, and of the preface to Tennemann. The new philosophical generation will understand the necessity of transporting itself to the living centre of things, of no longer making philosophy a collection of speculations without unity, of restoring to it at last its ancient and broad acceptation, its eternal mission of giving vital truths to man.

Philosophy, in fact, is not a science apart, it is one side of all sciences. In each science we should distinguish the technical and special part, which has no value except in so far as it contributes to discovery and exposition, from the general results which the science in question provides on its own account towards the solution of the problem of things. Philosophy constitutes the common head, the central part of the grand fabric of human knowledge, the focus where all the rays touch one another in an identical light. There is not a line which traced to the very end does not lead to that focus. Psychology which one has become accustomed to consider as the whole of philosophy is after all one of many sciences, nay, it may not even provide the most philosophical results. Logic understood as the analysis of reason is only a part of psychology; considered as a repertory of processes to lead the mind to the discovery of the truth, it is simply useless, seeing that it is impossible

to give recipes for the discovery of truth. Refined culture and the multiple training of the intellect are from this point of view the only legitimate logical methods. Morality and the theory of divine justice are not sciences apart, they become heavy and ridiculous, when one pretends to treat them according to a definite and scientific programme, they should only be the divine resonance resulting from all things or at most the æsthetic education of the pure instincts of the soul, the analysis of which belongs to psychology. By what right then can we constitute a whole, having the right to assume the name of philosophy, seeing that this whole, in the only limits one can assign to it, has already a particular name, that is psychology (72)? Antiquity grasped this lofty and broad acceptation of philosophy in a marvellous manner. Philosophy was to it the sage, the investigator, Jupiter on Mount Ida, the spectator taking up his stand in the world. "Among those who rush to the public festivals of Greece, some are attracted by the wish to contest and to dispute the palm; others come thither to transact their commercial business; a few again come neither for glory, nor for profit, but merely to *see;* and these are the noblest, for the spectacle is provided for them, and they are there for no one's sake but their own. So on entering life, some aspire to mingle in the strife, others are ambitious to make a fortune; but there are some noble souls who despise vulgar cares and while the common herd of combatants rend one another to pieces in the arena, look upon themselves as spectators in the vast amphitheatre of the universe. They are the philosophers (73)."—Never has philosophy been more perfectly defined.

At the origin of rational research, the word "philosophy" might without causing inconvenience represent the whole of human knowledge. But when each of the series of studies became sufficiently extensive to absorb whole existences and to present a side of universal life, each branch became an inde-

pendent science and left the common trunk impoverished by those successive curtailments. The ripe fruits, having thrived upon the common sap became detached from the stalk and left the tree bereft. In that way philosophy only preserved the least defined notions, those which were unable to group themselves in distinct unities and which had no other reason for being united under one name than the impossibility of arranging each of them under another name. The time has come to revert to the acceptation of antiquity, assuredly not to confine once more all the sciences with their infinite details within philosophy, but to make it the common centre of the conquests of the human intellect, the arsenal of vital stores. Who will dare to say that natural history, comparative anatomy and physiology, astronomy, history and above all the history of the human intellect do not afford to the thinker results as philosophical as the analysis of the memory, of the imagination, of the association of ideas? Who will dare to pretend that Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Cuvier, the Humboldts, Goethe, Herder, had not as much right to the title of philosopher as Dugald Stewart or Condillac? The philosopher means a mind sacredly inquisitive of all things; it is the *gnostic* in the primitive and elevated sense of that word; the philosopher is the thinker, no matter what the object be on which he exercises his thought.

No doubt the days are gone long ago when every thinker summed up his philosophy in a Περὶ φύσεως. When we come to reflect that the human intellect in its legitimate impatience and naive presumption deemed itself able at the very outset to trace the system of the universe in a few pages, then the patient investigations of modern science, the innumerable ramifications of the problems, the limit of research retreating before advancing discovery, in short the infinity of things—will warrant the belief that any "summary" of the world must be infinite as the world itself. An Aristotle would nowadays

be an impossibility. Not only has the alliance of psychological and moral studies with the physical and mathematical sciences become a rare phenomenon; but a subdivision, even restricted as to its object, of a branch of human knowledge is often too vast a field for the labours of a laborious life and a deeply penetrating intellect. I do not say this in a critical spirit; this onward march of science is legitimate. The strictness of scrupulous analysis should succeed to primitive syncretism, to vague and approximative study. The superficial study of the whole must make room for the deep and successive investigation of parts; but we must guard ourselves against the belief that the circle of the human intellect closes there, and that the knowledge of particulars is its final term. If the end of science were the counting of the spots on the wings of the butterfly or the enumeration of the diverse species in the flora of a country, in a language often barbarous, it would be better, I think, to come back to the Platonic definition and to declare that there is no such thing as a science of that which passes away. It is no doubt right that experimental studies should be wide enough to include the analysis of all the individualities of the universe, but on the condition of being one day gathered into a perfect synthesis, which will be much superior to the primitive syncretism, because it will be based on a distinct knowledge of parts. When dissection shall have been carried to its utmost limits (and we may believe that in some sciences that limit has been reached), then and not till then will begin the movement of comparison and reconstruction. We shall have had the humiliating and laborious task; nevertheless, when posterity shall have gone far beyond us by profiting by our work, the science of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will perhaps incur as harsh a reproach for having been too minute and pragmatic as we reproach the ancients for having been too summary and hypothetical. It will only prove the difficulty of

knowing how to appreciate the necessity and legitimacy of the successive revolutions of the human intellect.

One consequence of this fragmentary and partial method of modern science has been to banish from philosophy the cosmology which at its origin almost wholly constituted the former. He whom we look upon usually as the founder of rational philosophy, Thales, would nowadays be no longer called a philosopher. We feel ourselves bound to divide into two or three parts scientific lives like those of Descartes and Leibnitz or even like that of Newton (albeit that with him the part of pure philosophy is already very much weaker), and still those lives have been perfectly "one"; and the word by which their unity was expressed was that of philosophy. The time has, no doubt, gone by to appeal against this necessary elimination; philosophy, after having held in its bosom all the nascent sciences has been compelled to see them separate from it when they attained a sufficient degree of development. Will the day come when they shall return to it, not with the mass of their details, but with their general results; the day when philosophy shall be less a science apart than a focus of all the sciences, a kind of luminous centre in which all branches of human knowledge will meet at their summit, diverging in proportion to their descent into details? The regular law by which their progress takes its start from syncretism and gets to synthesis by way of analysis which alone is the legitimate method, which alone has a philosophic value, may warrant such hope. The appearance of a work like the "Cosmos" of M. von Humboldt, in which a single *savant* renewing in the nineteenth century the attempt of a Timæus or a Lucretius, reviews the Cosmos in its entirety proves that it is still possible to grasp once more the cosmic unity swamped by the infinite multitude of detail. If the final aim of philosophy be the truth on the general system of things, how then could it remain

indifferent to the science of the universe? Has not cosmology the same claim to holiness as the psychological sciences? Does not it start problems the solution of which is as imperatively demanded by our nature as that of questions related to ourselves and to the primary cause? Is not the world the first object that excites the curiosity of the human intellect, is it not the first to whet the craving to know which is the marked trait of our rational nature, and which makes of us beings capable of philosophizing? Take the mythologies, which give us the true measure of the spiritual needs of man; they all open with a cosmogony; the cosmological myths occupy a space in them at least as great as those relating to morals or theosophy. And even in our days though the particular sciences are far from having reached their final form, how many precious data have they not afforded to the mind that aspires to know philosophically? He who has not learnt from geology the history of our globe and of the beings who have successively populated it; from physiology the laws of life; from zoology and botany, the laws of form of all breathing things, and the general plan of animate nature (74); from astronomy, the structure of the universe; from ethnography and from history, the science of humanity in its evolution; he who has not learned this can he pretend to know the law of things, nay, to know man whom he only studies in the abstract and in individual manifestations?

I will endeavour to explain by an instance the manner in which one might use the particular sciences in the solution of a philosophical question. I select the problem which from the very first years that I began to philosophize has occupied my mind most; the problem of the *origins of mankind.*

There can be no doubt as to the existence of mankind having had a beginning. It is equally certain that the appearance of mankind on earth was accomplished in accordance with the permanent laws

of nature (75), and that the first facts of his psychological and physiological life, though so strangely different from those that characterize his actual condition were the development pure and simple of the laws that are still in force to-day, operating in a medium profoundly different. Hence we are confronted by an important problem, if ever there was one, and from the solution of which would spring data of capital importance on the whole of the meaning of human life. And in my opinion this problem should be divided into six subordinate questions all of which should be solved by different sciences.

1st. *Ethnographic Question.*—If and up to what point the races actually existent are deducible from one another. Were there several centres of creation? which are they, etc.?—The investigator should therefore have at command the *ensemble* of the whole of modern ethnography, in its certain as well as hypothetical parts, also the anatomical and linguistic knowledge without which the study of ethnography is impossible.

2nd. *Chronological Question.*—At what epoch did mankind or each race make its appearance on earth? —This question should be resolved by the collating of two means; on the one hand, the geological data; on the other, the data supplied by the antique chronologies and above all by the monuments. Hence the author must be learned in geology, and well versed in the antiquities of China, Egypt, of India, of the Hebrews, etc.

3rd. *Geographical Question.*—At which point of the globe did mankind or the diverse races take their starting point?—Here the knowledge of geography in its most philosophic part would be necessary and above all the deepest scientific knowledge of antique literatures and the traditions of the various peoples. Languages in this instance supplying the principal element the author should be an able linguist, or if not, he should at any rate have at his disposal the results acquired by comparative philology.

4th. *Physiological Question.*—Possibility and mode of apparition of organic life and of human life. The laws that have produced that apparition, which is still continued in the hidden corners of nature. To deal with this side of the question, a thorough knowledge of comparative physiology is necessary. The author should be able to form an opinion on the most delicate point of that science.

5th. *Psychological Question.*—The condition of mankind and of the human intellect at the first stages of its existence. Primitive languages. Origin of thought and of language. Must have a deep insight into the secrets of spontaneous psychology, an habitual practice of the higher branches of psychology and philosophical sciences. Must be thoroughly versed in the experimental study of the child and the first exercise of its reason, in the experimental study of the savage, consequently must be extensively acquainted with the literature of the great travellers, and as much as possible have travelled himself among the primitive peoples which are fast disappearing from the face of the earth, at any rate in their original condition of spontaneous impulse; must have a knowledge of all primitive literatures, of the comparative genius of the various peoples, of comparative literature, a refined and scientific taste, tact, and spontaneous initiative; a childlike and at the same time serious nature, susceptible of great enthusiasm with regard to the spontaneous and capable of reproducing it within himself, within the very seat of deeply reflected thought.

6th. *Historical Question.*—The history of mankind before the definite apparition of reflected thought.

I am convinced that there is a science of the origins of mankind, and that it will be constructed one day not by abstract speculation but by scientific research. What human life in the actual condition of science would suffice to explore all the sides of this single problem? And still, how can it be resolved without the scientific study of the positive data?

And if it be not resolved how can we say that we know man and mankind? He who would contribute to the solution of this problem, even by a very imperfect essay, would do more for philosophy than by half a century of metaphysical meditations.

CHAPTER X.

PSYCHOLOGY, such as it has been understood up till now, appears to me to have been conceived in rather too narrow a spirit and not to have yielded its most important results (76). First of all, it has generally confined itself to the study of the human intellect in its complete development and such as it appears nowadays. That which is done by physiology and anatomy for organized matter, psychology has done for the phenomena of the soul, of course with the differences of method required by objects so different in their nature. But, just as by the side of the science of the organs and their operations, there is another dealing with the history of their formation and development, so, by the side of psychology which describes and classifies the functions of the soul there should be an *embryogony of the human mind* which would study the apparition and the first exercise of those faculties, the action of which, so regular now, makes us almost forget that at the start, they were only rudimentary. Such a science would no doubt be more difficult and hypothetic than that which simply confines itself to the observation of the present state of the conscience. Nevertheless, there are sure means that may lead us from the actual to the primitive state, and if direct experiments with regard to the latter are impossible, the method of induction bearing upon the present may bring us to the precedent condition of which the former is but the expansion. If, in fact, the primitive condition has

disappeared for ever, the phenomena characteristic of it have still their analogies among us. Each individual travels in his turn along the line which the whole of mankind has followed, and the series of the development of human reason is exactly parallel to the progress of individual reason, with the exception of old age, which will never be known by humanity, destined as it is to be for ever blossoming afresh into eternal youth. Hence, the phenomena of infancy present to us the phenomena of primitive man (77). On the other hand the onward march of humanity is not simultaneous in all its parts; while in the one case it rises to sublime heights, in the other it still wallows in the mire which was its cradle, and such is the infinite variety that animates it, that at a given moment one might find in the different countries inhabited by man all the various ages we find disposed "in echelon" in its history. Races and climates produce simultaneously in humanity the same differences which time has shown successively in the series of their developments. The phenomena which, for instance, marked the dawn of human consciousness, may be traced back again in the everlasting infancy of those non-perfectible races, which have remained as witnesses to what happened at the outset of man's existence. Not that we should absolutely maintain that the savage is the primitive man; the infancy of the various human races must have differed very much according to the sky under which they were born. No doubt the wretched creatures who first stammered forth inarticulate sounds on the forbidding soil of Africa and Oceania were very unlike those simple and graceful beings that became the progenitors of the religious and theocratic race of the Semites and the vigorous ancestors of the philosophical and rational race of the Indo-Germanic people. But those differences no more militate against general inductions than the varieties of character among individuals impede the psychologists' progress. Hence the infant and the savage

must be the great objects of study of him who would scientifically construct the primeval ages of humanity. How is it that people have failed to understand that there lies a *science* of the highest interest in the psychological observation of those races, which the civilized man superciliously neglects, and that those anecdotes reported by travellers which apparently are only fit to amuse children contain in fact the most profound secrets of human nature?

Science has a still more direct means of communication with those distant ages; the products themselves of the human mind at its different epochs; the monuments in which man has expressed himself, and which he has left behind to trace his footsteps. Unfortunately, they only date from a period too near our own, and the cradle of humanity remains still wrapt in mystery. How, in fact, could man have bequeathed the testimony of an age when he was scarcely in possession of his own powers, and when having no past, he could bestow no thought upon the future? But there is one monument in which are inscribed all the diverse phases of this marvellous Genesis, which in its thousand aspects represents each of the conditions, sketched in turns by humanity, a monument not of one epoch only, but each part of which, if we can only assign a date to it, contains the materials of all the previous centuries capable of being revealed by analysis; an admirable poem which was born and developed with man, which accompanied him at each step and received the imprint of each of his different modes of thinking, of feeling. This monument, this poem is language. The deep study of its mechanism and history will always prove the most efficacious means of mastering primeval psychology. In fact, the problem of its origin is identical with that of the origin of the human mind, and thanks to it, we stand face to face with the primeval epoch like the artist who is to restore an antique statue in accordance with the mould in which its limbs were cast. No doubt,

primeval languages have as far as science is concerned, disappeared—disappeared together with the condition of humanity they represented, and no one will henceforth be tempted to tire himself in their pursuit with such ancient linguistic knowledge as he may command. But it is not a mere hypothesis that, among the idioms, the knowledge of which has become possible to us, there are some that more than others have preserved the trace of the various processes that presided at the birth and the development of language and which have undergone a less complicated wear and tear of decomposition and reconstruction ; it is a result proven by the most elementary notions of comparative philology. It is well to remind people of this ; seeing that arbitrary whim could not possibly have played the smallest part in the invention and the formation of language. There is not a single one of our most time-worn dialects which is not connected by a more or less direct genealogy with one of the first attempts which themselves were the spontaneous creation of all the human faculties, "the living product of the whole inward man" (Fr. Schlegel). But who would be capable of finding the trace of the primeval world amidst that immense network of artificial complication with which certain languages have become enwrapped beneath the numerous layers of peoples and idioms which have absolutely been piled upon one another in certain countries? Reduced to such data, the problem would be insoluble. Fortunately there are other languages that have been less worked up by successive revolutions, that are less variable in their forms, and spoken by peoples doomed to remain stationary, with whom the motion of ideas has not necessitated constant modification in the instrument of ideas ; they still remain as witnesses, not by any means, of the primeval *language*, nor even of *a* primeval language, but of the *primitive process* by means of which man succeeded in imparting to his thought an outward and social expression.

Hence, we should have to create a *primeval psy-*

chology showing the tables of facts of the human intellect at its first awakening, the influences by which it was governed at first, the laws that governed its first manifestations. Our vulgar mode of perception scarcely allows us to conceive the difference between that condition and ours, the wondrous activity secretly stored by those fresh and stirring organizations, those powerful but still obscured consciences, giving full and unfettered play to all the native energy of life's spring. Who can, in our reflective state, with our metaphysical refinements, and our senses that have become coarse, form a correct idea of the antique harmony, then existing between the thought and the sensation, between man and nature? Looking back to that horizon where heaven and earth become confounded with one another, man was god, and the god was man. *Alienated from himself*, to use Maine de Biran's expression, man, as Leibnitz says, became the concentric mirror in which was depicted that nature from which he could scarcely distinguish himself. It was not a coarse materialism, only understanding, only feeling the physical; it was not an abstract spiritualism substituting entities for life; it was a high harmony, perceiving the one in the other, expressing by one another the two worlds lying open before man. The *sensitiveness* (the sympathy with nature, *Naturgefühl* as Fr. Schlegel says) was the more delicate, seeing that the rational faculties were the less developed. The savage possesses an amount of perspicuity, of curiosity that astonishes us; his senses detect a thousand imperceptible shades that escape the senses or rather the attention of the civilized man. Unfamiliar as we are with nature we only see uniformity there where nomadic or agricultural peoples have perceived numerous instances of individual originality. We must assume primeval man to have possessed an infinitely delicate tact which enabled him to grasp, with a *finesse* of which we can no longer form an idea, the qualities "to be felt" which were to be the basis of the nomenclature

of things. The faculty of interpretation which is simply an extremely great sagacity in perceiving a connection between things was more developed in them. They saw ever so many things at once. Nature spoke to them more intelligibly than she does to us, or rather they found in themselves a secret echo which replied to all those voices from without and reproduced them in articulations, in words. Hence those abrupt passages the trace of which is utterly lost to our slow and laboured systems. Who could once more seize upon those fleeting impressions? Who could once more find the truant paths along which the imagination of primeval man travelled, the association of ideas that guided him in this work of spontaneous production, in which now man, then nature herself "spliced" the broken strand of analogies, and wove their reciprocal action in an indissoluble unity? What shall we say of that marvellous intellectual synthesis, necessary to the creation of a metaphysical system like the Sanskrit language, a sweet and sensuous poem like the Hebrew? What shall we say of that infinite liberty to create, of that boundless fancy, of that wealth, of that exuberance, of that complexity which is beyond our grasp? We should not be capable of speaking Sanskrit, our most eminent musicians would fail to execute the octuple and nonuple quavers of the Song of the Illinois. Ye sacred ages, primeval ages of humanity, who can understand you?

In view of those strange productions of earlier ages, of those facts that seem outside the normal order of the universe, we are inclined to suppose specific laws that have now been abrogated. But there is no temporary government in nature; the same laws that govern the world to-day are those that have presided at its constitution. The formation of the different planetary systems and their preservation, the apparition of organized beings and of life, that of man and of conscience, the first feats of humanity were only the development of an aggre-

gate of physiological and psychological laws settled once for all, without the superior agent, who moulds his action according to these laws, having interposed a specially intentional will in the mechanism of things. No doubt everything springs from the primary cause, but the primary cause does not act upon partial motives, by special manifestations of will, as Malebranche would say. What it has done is and remains the best, the means once established are and remain the most efficacious. But how, it will be said, can we explain facts so diverse by the same system? Why do those strange facts that marked the origin of man no longer repeat themselves, if it be true that the laws which produced them still exist? It is because the circumstances are no longer the same; the incidental causes that determined those laws at their grand phenomenal moments do no longer exist. As a general rule we only formulate the laws of nature with a view to the actual condition, and the actual condition is only a particular case. It is like a partial equation drawn from a more general equation by a special hypothesis. The general equation virtually contains all the others, and its truth lies in the special truth of all the others.

It is the same with all the laws of nature. Applied amidst different surroundings, they produce altogether different effects, if the same circumstances present themselves, the same effects will reappear. Hence there are no two series of laws co-operating with one another in order to fill up their voids and to supply their individual insufficiency; there is no interim in nature; creation and preservation are wrought by the same means, operating under different conditions. Geology, after having appealed for a long while to causes different from those operating to-day, to explain cataclysms and the successive phases of the globe, is coming back from every direction to proclaim that the actual laws were sufficient to produce these revolutions. Those conditions of life which appear to us fantastical because they were different from

ours, what strange combinations they must have wrought! And when man appeared on this earth which was still in process of creation, without being suckled by a woman, nor tended by a mother, without the lessons of a father, without ancestors or fatherland, can we form an idea of the astonishing facts that must have happened at the first awakening of his intellect, at the sight of that fruitful nature, whence he was beginning to be divided. Those first apparitions of human activity must have been marked by an energy, a spontaneousness of which nothing nowadays can convey an idea to us. Necessity, in fact, is the real incidental cause of the exercise of all power. Man and nature went on creating as long as there was a void in the scheme of things, they forgot to create as soon as the need of it no longer compelled them. It is not that from that moment they were one power short; but those productive faculties, which at the origin were exercised on an immense scale, henceforth deprived of nutrition, were reduced to an obscure rôle, and as it were, relegated to a back corner in nature. Thus for instance, spontaneous organization, which in the beginning brought forth everything that lives, is still preserved on an imperceptible scale on the lowest rungs of the animal ladder; thus the spontaneous faculties of the human mind still live in the facts of the instinct, but they are lessened and almost stifled by reflected thought; thus the creative spirit of the language is still met with in that which presides at its revolutions; for the force that sustains life is in reality that which brings forth, and to develop is in one sense to create. If man were to lose language, he would once more create it. But he finds it ready made, hence his productive force, in default of an object, withers away like every faculty not exercised. The infant still possesses it before it is able to speak, but loses it as soon as science from without renders the creation from within useless.

How, indeed, is it possible to reduce the science of

man to a system by studying man in his age of reflection only, as Scotch psychology has done, when his originality is as it were effaced by artificial culture, when artificial motors have replaced the powerful instincts under the influence of which he formerly worked at his own development with so much energy?

The second void with which I meet in psychology and which in the same way can be filled up only by the philological study of the works of the human mind is in its application to the mere individual, without ever rising to the consideration of humanity at large. If the immense historical development of the latter end of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries has been productive of any result at all, it is that which proves that there is a life of humanity just as there is a life of the individual; that history is not a purposeless series of isolated facts, but a spontaneous tendency towards an ideal goal, that the perfect is the centre of gravity of humanity as of everything that lives (78). Hegel's claim to immortality consists in having been the first to express with perfect clearness this vital force which neither Vico nor Montesquieu had noticed, of which even Herder had but the vaguest notion. Through this he has insured for himself the title of the definite founder of the philosophy of history. Henceforth, history will be no longer what it was to Bossuet, the unfolding of a particular plan conceived and realized by a power superior to man, which leads man, who can only bestir himself according to its designs; it will no longer be what it was to Montesquieu, an interlinked chain of facts and causes; what it was to Vico, a lifeless and almost reasonless movement. It will be the history of a being, developing himself by his inward power, creating himself and attaining by diverse degrees to the full possession of himself. There is, no doubt, a movement, as Vico meant, there are, no doubt causes, in Montesquieu's sense; there is, no doubt, a previously imposed plan, agreeing with Bossuet's theory. But

what they failed to perceive was the active and living force impelling that movement, animating those causes, and which without any co-operation from without, and solely by its tendency towards the perfect, accomplishes the providential plan. Perfect autonomy, inward creation, in short, life; such is the law of humanity.

Assuredly Bossuet's plan is simple enough; simple like a pyramid; *commandment* on one side; *obedience* on the other; God and man, the King and the subject, the Church and the believer. It is simple but harsh, and after all it is doomed. We shall, henceforth, have great difficulty to imagine in what manner those who do not believe in progress conceive the world. If there be a notion we have outgrown, it is that of nations succeeding one another, traversing the same periods in order to die in their turn, then to revive under other names, and thus without cessation recommencing the same dream. In that case what a nightmare humanity would be; what a tissue of absurdities the various revolutions! What a colourless, vapid thing life! Amidst such a poor system, would it be really worth while to aspire ardently to the beautiful and the true, to sacrifice one's happiness and peace of mind to them? I can conceive such a paltry conception of actual existence in the severely orthodox, who transports the whole of his present existence to the one beyond; I fail to conceive it in the philosopher. The idea of humanity is the grand line of demarcation between the ancient and the new philosophies. Consider well why the ancient systems no longer satisfy you; you will find that it is because that idea is utterly absent from it. In that, I repeat, lies the whole of the new philosophy (79).

The moment we admit that humanity is conceived as a conscience that shapes and developes itself, we admit the necessity of a *psychology of humanity*, just as there is a psychology of the individual. The irregular and fortuitous appearance of its progress

must not hide from us the laws that govern it. Botany shows us that all the trees would be as regular as the coniferæ with regard to their form, the arrangement of their leaves and branches, were it not for abortion and suppression which, destroying the symmetry, impart to them such fantastic shapes. A river would flow straight to the sea but for the hills which compel it to turn so frequently aside. In the same way humanity, apparently given up to chance, yields to laws which other laws may cause to deviate, but which are nevertheless the reason of its movement. History is the necessary form of the science of everything contained in the "*will-be.*" The science of languages means the history of languages; the science of literatures and religions means the history of literatures and religions. The science of the human intellect means the history of the human intellect. To attempt to seize a given moment only of those successive existences in order to dissect and to fixedly examine it is simply falsifying their nature. For they are not complete at a given moment, they are merely tending towards completion. Such is the human intellect. By what right do you select the man of the nineteenth century to illustrate the theory of it? I am aware that there are common elements which the examination of all countries and all peoples will yield to analysis. But these, on account of their very stability are not the most essential to science. The variable and characteristic element is much more important. The only reason why physiology often appears so much tautology and emptiness is because it confines itself too exclusively to those generalizations of small value which make it look like the lesson of philosophy of the "Bourgeois Gentilhomme." Philology commits the same mistake when instead of taking languages in their individual varieties, it confines itself to the general analysis of the forms common to all, to what we call *general grammar.*

How unsuitable, in fact, is our dry and abstract

mode of treating psychology for the purpose of putting into relief the differential shades of the sentiments of humanity. It would lead us to conclude that every race, every century understood God, the soul, morality in an identical manner (80). We never seem to suspect that each nation with its temples, its divinities, its poesy, its heroic traditions, its fantastic beliefs, its laws and its institutions represents a unity, a way of its own of taking life, a separate tone in humanity, a distinctive faculty of the great soul. The true psychology of humanity would consist in analyzing the one after the other those various lives in their complexity, and as every nation has generally tied its suprasensitive life into a spiritual sheaf, which is its literature, true psychology would consist above all in the history of literatures. The second volume of M. von Humboldt's *Cosmos* (the history of a sentiment traced in all its varieties and shades among every race and through the lapse of all the centuries) may be taken as an example of this historical psychology. Ordinary psychology is too much like that literature which by dint of representing humanity in its general characteristics and rejecting local and individual colour will perish through lack of vitality of its own and originality.

I am under the impression that the comparative study of the different literatures has afforded me a much wider idea of human nature than that generally conceived. No doubt there is a good deal that is universal, there are a great many common elements in human nature. No doubt we may see that there is but one psychology the same that there is but one literature, seeing that all literatures live on the same common fund of sentiments and ideas. But this universality is not where we believe it to be, and to apply a rigid and unbending theory to mankind of different epochs is simply to falsify the complexion of facts. That which is universal, is the great divisions and the great needs of nature; they are, if

I may so express it, the natural pigeon-holes, filled up successively by those diverse and variable forms; religion, poesy, morality, etc. Looking at the past of humanity only, religion for instance would seem to be essential to human nature; and still religion in the ancient forms is fated to disappear. That which will remain is the place it occupied, the want to which it corresponded, and which will be satisfied one day by something analogous to it. Has *morality* itself been a form of all ages—provided we attach to the word the complete and quasi-evangelical sense we give to it? A not over delicate analysis, taking no account of the different physiognomy of facts, might affirm such a thing. True psychology which takes care not to designate by the same name facts of a different complexion, though they may be analogous cannot make up its mind to this. Is the word morality applicable to the form which the idea assumed in the ancient Arab, Hebrew and Chinese civilizations, which it still assumes among savage peoples, etc.? I am not making one of those commonplace objections here, which have been so often repeated since the days of Montaigne and Bayle, and which attempted to prove by means of a few divergencies or a few ambiguous terms that in certain peoples the moral sense was entirely absent. I admit that the moral sense or its equivalents appertain to the essence of humanity, but I maintain that to apply the same denomination to facts so diverse is to speak incorrectly. There exists in humanity a faculty or a need, in one word a capacity which in our days is supplied by a code of morals, and which has always been supplied, which will always be supplied by something analogous. In the same way I conceive that in the future the word morality will not be the proper word and that it will be replaced by another. As far as my personal use goes, I prefer to substitute the word æstheticism for it. Face to face with a given action, I ask myself whether it is ugly or beautiful rather than whether it be good or bad, and

I believe that mine is a good *criterion;* because with the simple morality that constitutes the honest man, it is still possible to lead a sufficiently paltry existence. Be this as it may, the immutable should only be looked for in the divisions of human nature themselves, in its compartments, if I may so express it, and not in the forms that are adjusted to it, and which may be replaced by substitutes. This is something analogous to the fact of chemical substitution in which analogous bodies may in their turn fill up the same frames.

China offers me the best example to elucidate what I have just said. It would be altogether incorrect to say that the Chinese are a nation without morality, without religion, without a mythology, without God; in that case they would be a monster among mankind, and yet it is very certain that the Chinese have neither morality, religion, a mythology, nor a God in the sense we understand them. Theology and the supernatural occupy no place in the minds of these people; and Confucius only acted in accordance with the spirit of his nation when he dissuaded his disciples from the study of things divine (81). So vague are the ideas of the Chinese with regard to the Godhead, that since the days of Francis Xavier the missionaries have had the greatest difficulty to find a Chinese term, signifying God. The Catholics, after a good deal of groping about, succeeded at last in agreeing upon a word; but when, about thirty years ago, the Protestants began to translate the Bible into Chinese, there was a repetition of the difficulties. The variety of terms employed by the different Protestant missionaries to designate God became such, that they had to have recourse to a council, which it appears to me, decided nothing at all, seeing that Mr. Medhurst who has recently published a dissertation on the subject which was printed at Shanghai still discusses the sense in which the classic authors employ each of the terms that have been proposed as equivalents for the word God. We might point out similar analogies

with regard to morality and religion, and prove that morality with the Chinese is only the observance of an established ceremonial and religion the respect due to ancestors. M. Saint-Marc-Girardin when he compared Voltaire's "Orphelin de la Chine" with the original has pertinently pointed how the pathetic and passionate elements disappear from the Chinese system to become systematic duty, how the family affections disappear by the family becoming an institution (82). A careful study of the different zones of the affections of the human species would reveal everywhere, not an identity of elements, but analogous composition, the same plan, the same disposition of parts in diverse proportions. A given element, prominent in a given race, is only rudimentary in another. "Mythologism" so dominant in India scarcely shows in China, but is nevertheless perceptible on an infinitely reduced scale. Philosophy, the dominant element in the Indo-Germanic races appears to be altogether foreign to the Semites, and still, on looking very closely, one perceives in the latter, not the thing itself, but its rudimentary germ.

At the outset of our scientific career we are apt to imagine the laws of the psychological and physiological world as absolutely non-deviating formulas, but before long the scientific spirit modifies this conception. We meet with individualism everywhere; the genus and the species almost melt into one in the analysis of the naturalist; each fact shows itself as *sui generis;* the most simple phenomenon appears incapable of being reduced; the order of real things is only a vast oscillation of tendencies producing by their infinitely varied combinations constantly varying apparitions. Reason is the only one law that governs the world; it is as impossible to reduce to formulas the law of things as to reduce to a settled number of *schemes* the turns of speech of the orator, as to enumerate the precepts on which the moral man bases his conduct towards the good. "Endeavour to be beautiful (83), and

then do at every moment that with which your heart will inspire you;" that is morality in a nutshell. All the other rules in their absolute form are faulty and mendacious. The general rules are only trumpery makeshifts to hide the absence of the grand moral sense, which in itself is sufficient to show man at all times what is most beautiful. It is an attempt to substitute previously prepared instructions for inmost spontaneousness. The variety of cases constantly baffles all previsions. There is nothing, absolutely nothing that can replace the soul; no amount of teaching can make up with man for the inspiration of his nature.

Psychology, as understood up till now, is to true historical psychology what the comparative philology of Bopp and W. von Humboldt is to that "skimpy" part of dialectics, formerly entitled *comparative grammar*. In the latter one treated language like a petrified thing, settled once for all, stereotyped in its forms, as something finished, and which was supposed to have been always, and to remain always as it was. In the former, on the other hand, they take the living organism, the specific variety, the movement, the process of evolution, in short, the history. Its history is the true form of the science of languages (84). It is no doubt useful to take an idiom at a given moment of its existence, if it be an idiom one is learning to speak. But to stop there is as little profitable to science as if we limited the study of organized bodies to the examination of what they are at a definite moment without inquiring into the laws of their development. No doubt if languages were like inanimate bodies condemned to immobility, grammar should be purely theoretical. But they are alive, like man and mankind who speak them, they are constantly being decomposed and reconstructed; it is a real inward growth, a constant circulation from within to without, and from without to within, a continual "becoming." As such they are like everything that lives subject to the laws of

changing and successive existence, to their progress and phases, in consequence of that secret impulsion, which allows neither man nor the productions of his mind to remain stationary.

In the same way psychology has insisted too much on considering man from the point of view of his "being" and has not inquired sufficiently into his evolution. Everything that lives has a history; the psychological man as well as the human body, aggregate humanity as well as the individual lives and renews its life. They constitute a moving picture in which the masses of colour, blending with one another by imperceptible gradations should by a constant play tone down and absorb one another, expand and at the same time limit one another. It is a reciprocal action and reaction, a commerce of common parts, a growth on a common trunk. In this eternal evolution one would in vain look for the stable element to which to apply the anatomical process. The word *soul*, so admirably fit to designate the supra-sensitive life of man will always be fallacious and untrue if applied in the sense of a permanent basis which would be the ever identical subject of phenomena. It is this false connection of a fixed *substratum* which has given to psychology its hard and fast forms. The soul is taken for a fixed, permanent being, and analyzed like a natural body, while after all it is only the ever variable resultant of the multiple and complex facts of existence. The soul means individual evolution, just as God means universal evolution. It is certain that if there were an invariable "being" which we might call the soul, just as there are creations we call Iceland spar, quartz, mica, there would be a science called *psychology*, which would be analogous to mineralogy. So true is this that in taking up this standpoint we should cease studying the science of *the soul*, for there are various kinds, and take to studying the science of *souls*. This is how Aristotle understood it, who was far less guilty than people generally

think him, for to him the soul is only the persistent phenomenon of life. This above all, is the manner in which it was understood by ancient philosophy which made itself grotesque to the extent of founding a science called *pneumatology* or the science of spiritual beings ("God, man, the angel, and maybe animals," they said) just as, in natural history, we might found a science treating of the horse, the unicorn, the whale and the butterfly. The Scotch psychology avoided those scholastic absurdities, but still, it clung too much to the point of view of the "being" and not enough to the point of view of the evolution, it still conceived philosophy as the study of man in an abstract and absolute manner, and not as the study of the eternal "becoming." The science of man will only then be placed in its true light when students are persuaded that *conscience* evolves itself, vague, feeble, non-centralized at first, in the individual as well as in aggregate humanity, that it only attains its plenitude after having gone through diverse phases. It will then be seen that the science of the individual soul is the history of the individual soul, and the science of the human intellect, the history of the human intellect.

The great progress of modern thought has been the substitution of the category of *evolution* for the category of the "*being*"; of the conception of the relative for the conception of the absolute, of movement for immobility. Formerly everything was considered as "being" (an accomplished fact); people spoke of law, of religion, of politics, of poetry in an absolute fashion (85). At present everything is considered as in the process of formation (86). Not that formerly evolution and development were not, as they are to-day, general laws; but people had no perception of them. The earth revolved before Copernicus, albeit that it was thought to be stationary. Substantial hypotheses always precede phenomenal hypotheses. The Egyptian statue, motionless with

its hands "stuck" to its knees is the natural antecedent of the Greek that lives and moves.

But how is it possible to establish the history of the human intellect without the most extensive learning and without the study of the monuments bequeathed to us by every epoch? From that point of view nothing is useless, the most insignificant works are often the most important in so far as they energetically depict one aspect of things. The Talmud is a very curious monument of moral depression and extravagance; but I maintain that no one who has not studied that unique work can form an idea of how far the human intellect may go in its aberration from the paths of common sense. The works of the Latin poets of the decline are insipid enough in all conscience, nevertheless, unless one reads them, it is impossible to conceive the characteristics of a decadence, to get an idea of the exact colour of an epoch in which the intellectual sap is exhausted. Of all literatures, the Syriac is, I imagine, the most colourless. The writings of that nation are pervaded by a suave mediocrity for which I can find no name. Herein lies its very interest, no study affords a better idea of the *mediocre condition* of the human intellect. And, natural, unsophisticated mediocrity being a facet of human life just like any other, it has a claim to our attention. No doubt, such studies possess very little value from the æsthetic point of view, they are very precious from the scientific one. There is certainly very little to be learned from, and to admire in, the Latin poems of the Middle Ages and the scientific literature in general of those days; still, can we pretend to know the human mind if ignorant of the dreams that haunted their sleep of ten centuries' duration.

Among the special works in connection with the Semitic languages I know of none more urgent in the state of actual science than a complete and definitely authentic publication of the books of the small gnostic sect which subsists still at Bassora

under the name of Mendaites or Christians of St. John. Those books do not contain a single line of sense; they are simply so much raving composed in a barbarous and indecipherable style. It is that which constitutes their very value. For it is easier to study diverse natures in their crises than in their normal condition. The regularity of life only shows one surface and conceals in its depth the inmost mainsprings; in a state of ebullition, on the other hand, everything rises in its turn to the surface. Sleep, madness, delirium, somnambulism, hallucination afford the study of individual psychology a much more profitable field of observation than the regular condition. For the phenomena which in the latter state are effaced, as it were, by their insignificance show themselves in extraordinary crises in a more conspicuous manner by reason of their exaggeration. The physicist does not study galvanism in the feeble quantity presented by nature, but multiplies it by experiment in order to study it with more facility, being perfectly sure, after all, that the laws thus observed in their exaggerated condition are identical with those of the natural condition. In the same way the psychology of humanity should take its lessons above all from the study of the aberrations of mankind, of its dreams, of its hallucinations, of all those strange absurdities that may be met with at every page of the history of the human intellect.

The philosophical spirit can extract philosophy from no matter what. If I were condemned to make a special study of heraldry, it seems to me that I should cheerfully make up my mind to it and gather a honey that would have its sweetness like the veriest bee among a well stocked flowerbed. If I were incarcerated at Vincennes with the *Anecdota* of Pez or Martène and the Collection of d'Achery, I should consider myself the happiest of mortals. I commenced, and I hope to have the courage to finish a work on the history of Hellenism among the Eastern peoples (Assyrians, Arabs, Persians, Arme-

nians, Georgians, etc.). I can pledge my word that there is no more wearisome business, no more monotonous spectacle, no more colourless and less original page in literary history. Nevertheless, I hope to extract from this insignificant study some curious traits for the history of the human intellect; we shall meet in it with two profoundly different spirits, in presence of, and incapable of penetrating, one another, a superficial education without lasting effects which, by its contrast, will make us understand the immense fact of the Hellenic education of the Western peoples; singular misunderstandings, strange instances of utter nonsense will disclose voids, the knowledge of which will be useful in drawing up in a more exact way the map of the Semitic spirit and the Indo-Germanic spirit.

The history of the *Origins of Christianity* written by a critic who would go to the direct sources would undoubtedly be a work of importance. Well, that marvellous history, which if carried out in a scientific and final manner would revolutionize thought, with what should it be constructed? With utterly insignificant books, such as the book of Enoch, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Testament of Solomon, and in general the Apocryphal books of Jewish and Christian origin, the Chaldaic paraphrases, the Mishna, the Deutero-Canonical books, etc. On that day, Fabricius and Thilo who have prepared a creditable edition of these texts, Bruce who brought back from Abyssinia, the book of Enoch, Laurence, Murray and A. G. Hoffmann who have elaborated the text, will have done more for the work than Voltaire with the whole of the eighteenth century by his side.

Thus, from the vast point of view of the science of the human intellect works deemed insignificant at the first glance may prove to be the most important. A given literature in Asia which has absolutely no intrinsic value may afford data for the history of the human intellect more curious than no matter which

modern literature. The scientific study of the savage races would be attended with still more decisive results, if it were undertaken by truly philosophical minds. Just as the worst popular jargon is more apt to initiate us in the science of languages than an artificial language polished by the hand of man like French, so may a man be thoroughly versed in various literatures such as the French, the German, the English, the Italian, without having as much as perceived the great problem. Orientalists often make themselves ridiculous by attributing an absolute value to the literatures they cultivate. It would be too painful to have devoted the whole of one's life to deciphering a difficult text and then to have to admit that the text was not admirable. On the other hand, superficial minds smile and joke when they see serious people amuse themselves in translating and commenting books, possessing no form or style, which in our opinions would be only absurd and ridiculous. They are both in the wrong. We ought not to say; "This is absurd; this is magnificent." We should say; "This belongs to the human intellect, consequently it has its value." It is very patent at once that from the point of view of positive science there is nothing to be gained by the study of the East. A few hours given to the perusal of a modern work on medicine, mathematics or astronomy will be more useful as regards the knowledge of those sciences than long years of learned research devoted to the physicians, mathematicians and astronomers of the East (87). Even history is scarcely a sufficient motive to invest those studies with any value. For, first of all, the ancient history of the East is absolutely fabulous; secondly, the moment it becomes more or less trustworthy, the political history of the East becomes almost insignificant. The platitude of the Arabian and Persian historians who have transmitted to us the history of Islamism is absolutely without a parallel. And, in fairness be it said, the history itself is much more to blame than

the historians. What could the latter make out of a world of ice, as it were, consisting of whims and freaks of absurd and bloodthirsty despots, revolts of governors, changes of dynasties, successions of viziers, a world from which humanity is apparently completely absent, in which the voice of nature seems dumb, in which there is not a single true or original movement of the people? Certainly, those who are under the impression that a man studies Turkish literature with the same object that he would study German literature; to find something to admire, are right when they smile at those who devote their vigils to it, in looking at them as benighted intellects, incapable of doing aught else. As a rule, the modern literatures of the East are weak, and would not in themselves, deserve the attention of the serious student (88). But they become exceedingly valuable when bearing in mind that they afford important elements for the study of ancient literature and the comparative study of idioms. Nothing is useless when we know how to reduce it to its aim, but we must not lose sight of the fact that mediocrity has only its value in the whole of which it is a part.

But has the study of the ancient literatures of the East a value of its own, and irrespective of the history of the human intellect? I confess that there is real and incontestable beauty in those ancient productions of the East. Job and Isaiah, the Ramayana and the Mahabarata, the pre-Islamite poems are beautiful for the same reason that Homer is beautiful. But, if we analyze the feeling produced in us by those ancient works, what, as far as we are concerned, is their claim to the award of beauty? We admire a poem of M. de Lamartine, a tragedy of Schiller, a canto of Goethe, because we meet with our ideal in it. Do we equally meet with our ideal in the poetical dissertations of Job, in the sweet psalms of the Jews, in the picture of Arabian life of Antara, in the hymns of the Vedas, in the admirable episodes of Nal and Damayanti, of Yadnadatta, of Savitri, of the descent of the Ganga?

Is it our ideal we meet with in the symbolical figure of Um or of Brahma, in an Egyptian pyramid, or in the Caverns of Ellora? Certainly not. We can only admire on the condition of transporting ourselves to the times to which these monuments belong, of placing ourselves in the centre of human intellectuality, of regarding all this as the eternal growth of hidden forces. That is why limited and more or less rigid intellects who judge these ancient productions by clinging obstinately to the modern point of view cannot make up their minds to admire them, or else admire exactly that which is not worthy of admiration, or what is altogether absent from it (89). Just submit the myths of the Maruthas or the visions of Ezekiel to a man who is not versed in strange literatures, he will simply vote them hideous and repulsive. From his point of view, Voltaire was right in ridiculing Ezekiel (90), just as Perrault and some critics of the school of Alexandria were right in declaring Homer *ridiculous*, and Madame Dacier and Boileau are wrong when they undertake to defend Homer while still adhering to the same strange manner of viewing antiquity. To understand the true sense of those exotic beauties, we must have become identified with the intellect of aggregate humanity; we must feel, live, with it in order to grasp its originality, its life, its harmony even in its most eccentric creations wherever we meet with them. Champollion wound up by perceiving beauty in the Egyptian heads; the Jews consider the Talmud replete with a morality as lofty as that of the Gospel; the lovers of the Middle Ages stand lost in admiration before grotesque statues which the profane do not deem worthy of a look. Think you that this is the mere illusion of the erudite man or the ardent amateur? No; it simply arises from the fact that in every fold and corner of the handiwork of man there is hidden a ray of divine light, the careful observer knows where to find it. The altar on which the patriarchs sacrificed to Jehovah was, materially

speaking, only a heap of stones; considered in its humanitarian significance, as a symbol of the simplicity of those ancient modes of worship and of the natural and amorphous God of primeval humanity, that heap of stones was worth a temple of anthropomorphic Greece, and was certainly a thousandfold more beautiful than our temples of gold and marble raised and admired by people who do not believe in God. A little cowdung and a handful of *Kousa* herbs are enough for the Brahmin's sacrifice and for his reaching God in his own way. The rough-hewn cippus by which the Hellenes represented the Graces was more eloquent to them than beautiful allegorical statues. The value of things lies in what humanity can see in them, in the feelings it has attached to them, in the symbols it drew from them. So true is this that the imitations of primeval works, however perfect they are supposed to be, are not beautiful, while the works themselves are sublime. An exact reproduction of the pyramid of Ghizeh on the common of Saint-Denis would be mere childishness. In the latter days of Hebraic literature, the learned men composed psalms imitated from the ancient Canticles, so perfect as to puzzle every one. Well; we can only say that the old psalms are beautiful, while the modern ones are merely ingenious; and still the greatest adept can scarcely distinguish them from one another.

The beauty of a work should never be considered from an abstract point and independently of the surroundings that gave it birth. If the Ossianic poems of Macpherson were authentic they should be ranked with those of Homer. The moment it is proved that they are the work of a poet of the eighteenth century, they have only a mediocre value. For it is the true breath of humanity and not the literary merit that constitutes the beautiful. Let us suppose that a man of parts (it is almost the case with Apollonius of Rhodes) succeeded in catching a very fair imitation of the Homeric style in such

a way as to produce a poem in exactly the same style, a poem that should be to Homer's what "Les Paroles d'un Croyant" are to the Bible, that poem in many people's opinion, ought to be superior to Homer's; for the author would be able to avoid what we consider blemishes, or at any rate, the wants of transition, the contradictions. I should like to know how the absolute critics would manage to prove that such a poem is not in fact superior to the "Iliad," or rather to prove effectually that the "Iliad" is worth a world's ransom while the work of the modern man is doomed to mildew and oblivion on the shelves of a library after having for an instant diverted the quidnuncs. In what then does the beauty of Homer consist, seeing that a poem absolutely like his, written in the nineteenth century would not be beautiful? It is because the Homeric poem of the nineteenth century would not be true. It is not Homer who is beautiful, it is the Homeric life, the phase of mankind's existence as described in Homer. It is not the Bible that is beautiful, it is the Biblical manners and customs, the form of existence depicted in the Bible. It is not this or that Indian poem that is beautiful, it is the Indian life. What do we admire in "Telemaque"? Is it the perfect imitation of the antique form? Is it this or that description, this or that comparison borrowed from Homer or Virgil? No, they simply elicit the cool remark, as if we were stating a mere fact, "This man has caught the antique style in a remarkably delicate way." That which arouses our admiration and our sympathy in that beautiful book is exactly the modern spirit breathing through it, the genius of Christianity which prompted Fénélon in his description of the Elysian Fields; it is that policy so moral and so rational guessed at by a miracle as it were amidst the Saturnalia of an absolute monarchy.

The true literature of an age is that which expresses and depicts that age (91). Some sacred orators of the Restoration have bequeathed us funeral orations

imitated from those of Bossuet and almost entirely composed of the phrases of that great man. Well; these phrases which are beautiful in the work of the seventeenth century, because of their sincerity at that time, are insignificant later on because they are false and because they do not express the sentiments of the nineteenth century. Independently of any system, except that which dogmatically preaches utter annihilation, the tomb has its poesy, and this poesy is never more affecting perhaps than when an involuntary doubt mingles with the certainty latent in every heart, as if to moderate the too great prosaism of dogmatic affirmation. The chiaro-oscuro affords a softer and sadder tint, a less distinctly drawn horizon, more vague than and more analogous to the tomb. The few pages of M. Cousin on Santa-Rosa are more valuable, as far as our feelings go than a funeral oration imitated from those of Bossuet. A beautiful *copy* of a picture by Raphael is beautiful because it pretends nothing more than to represent Raphael. But a nineteenth century imitation of Bossuet is not beautiful, because it is a false application of forms that were true once upon a time; it does not express the humanity of its epoch.

It has been pointed out in a delicate manner how much the works of art with which our museums are crowded lose in their æsthetic value. There can be no doubt as to that, seeing that their position and their significance at the epoch when they were true contributed three-fourths of their beauty. A work has no value save in its framework and the framework of every work is its epoch. Did not the sculpture of the Parthenon possess a greater value in the place to which it belongs than stuck in little bits on the walls of a museum? I deeply admire the old religious monuments of the Middle-Ages, but face to face with our modern Gothic churches, built by an architect in a frock coat, piecing together the designs borrowed from the ancient fanes my feeling is only one of pain. Absolute admiration is always

artificial; I yield to no man in my admiration of the "Pensées" of Pascal, the Sermons of Bossuet; but I admire them as works of the seventeenth century. If those works were to appear in our days, they would scarcely deserve attention. True admiration is historial. Local colour possesses an incontestable charm when real; it is insipid when copied. I like the Alhambra and Broceliande in their reality; I cannot help laughing at the romanticist who imagines that by combining these words, he can construct a beautiful work. Therein lies the error of Chateaubriand and the cause of the incredible mediocrity of his school. He is no longer himself when he leaves the domain of critical appreciation and tries to produce after the model of the works, the beauties of which he so judiciously points out.

Among the works of Voltaire those in which he has copied the forms of the past are unmistakably forgotten. Who, outside the college, reads the "Henriade" or his tragedies. But those in which he has shown the elegant proofs of his subtle tact, of his immorality, of his witty scepticism will live, for they are true. I prefer "La Fête de Bellebat" or "La Pucelle" to "La Mort de César" or the poem on Fontenoy. It may be as infamous as you please; but it belongs essentially to the century, it is the man himself. Horace is more lyrical in *Nunc est bibendum* than in *Qualem ministrum fulminis alitem.*

Hence, true admiration of primitive works is only possible from the sole point of view of human intellect and by diving into its history not out of mere curiosity, but from a deep-rooted feeling and intimate sympathy. Every dogmatical point of view is absolute, all appreciation based on modern lines is out of place. The literature of the seventeenth century is no doubt admirable, but on the condition of it being transported to its own medium, the seventeenth century. It is only the pedant of the college who is capable of seeing in it the eternal type of beauty. In this as in everything else criticism is

the condition of the greater æsthetics. The true meaning of things can only be grasped by him who takes up his position at the fountain head itself of beauty; and who from the centre of human nature contemplates with rapturous ecstasy and in every direction those eternal productions in their infinite variety; temples, statues, poems, philosophical systems, religions, social forms, passions, virtues, sufferings, love, and nature itself which would have no value without the conscient being who idealizes it.

Science, art, philosophy would no longer have any value outside the point of view of the human race. He only is capable of grasping the great beauty of things who sees in everything a form of the intellect, a step towards God. For we are bound to say humanity in this instance is but a symbol; perfect beauty dwells in God alone, that is to say, in the whole. The most sublime works are those which humanity has made collectively and to which no name can be attached. The most beautiful things are anonymous. The critics who are simply scholars and nothing else regret this and bring all the resources of their art to bear upon the penetration of that secret. All this is so much blundering. Do they imagine that they have enhanced the beauty of this or that national epic because they discovered the name of the weak mortal who indited it. What do I care for that man who stands between humanity and me? What do I care for the insignificant syllables of his name? That name itself is a lie; it is not he, it is the nation; it is humanity toiling at a point of time and space who is the real author. Anonymousness in this instance is much more expressive and true; the only name which should designate the author of those spontaneous works is the name of the nation among which they saw the light; and that name instead of being inscribed on the title, is inscribed on every page. If Homer were a real and single personage it would still be absurd to say that he

is the author of the "Iliad." A like composition, evolved in one piece from an individual brain, without traditional antecedent, would have been insipid and impossible to read, we might as well suppose that it is Matthew, Mark, Luke and John who invented Christ. "Only rhetoric," said M. Cousin, "can ever suppose the plan of a grand work to belong to him who carries it out." The rhetoricians who look at everything from the *literary* side, who admire the poem, while they remain profoundly indifferent to the thing that has been perpetuated in song will never understand the part of the people in those works. It is the people that provides the material, and that material the rhetoricians are blind to and simply imagine that it is the invention of the poet. The Revolution and the Empire have produced no poem worthy of being mentioned; they did better. They left us the most marvellous epic in action. It is foolish in the extreme to admire the literary expression of the feelings and the acts of mankind and not to admire those sentiments and acts in mankind. Humanity alone is admirable. Genius is only the editor of the inspirations of the crowd. Their glory lies in being so deeply sympathetic with the ever creative soul, as to feel the throbbings of that great heart resound beneath their pen. To endeavour to exalt them by revealing their individuality is merely to lower them; it is to destroy their true glory in order to ennoble them by chimeras. True nobility does not consist in having a name of one's own, a glory of one's own, but in belonging to the noble race of the children of God, in being a soldier lost in the immense army marching onward towards the conquest of the perfect.

If transported to those open fields of humanity with what pity will the critic look upon that paltry admiration that clings to the handwriting of the writer rather than to the genius of him who has dictated. No doubt good criticism should allot a

great share to great men. They are valuable among humanity and through humanity. They distinctly and eminently feel what the world feels only vaguely. They impart a language and a voice to those mute instincts, which, pent up in the crowd—a stammering being if ever there was one—aspire to find their expression and recognized themselves in their accents. "Oh, sublime poet," they say to him, "we were mute and thou hast given us a voice. We were seeking in the dark for ourselves and thou hast revealed us to ourselves." It is an admirable dialogue between the man of genius and the crowd. The crowd lends him the grand material, the man of genius gives expression to it, gives it shape and creates it; then the crowd that feels but cannot speak, recognizes itself and shouts for joy. It sounds like one of those musical choruses, arranged in dialogue where now one, then several alternate with and reply to one another. Now it is the solitary voice, thin and prolonged which resounds in sweet but penetrating notes. Then comes the grand outburst, apparently discordant, but powerful in effect, amidst which the small still voice continues, but henceforth absorbed in the grand concert which at last gets beyond, and carries it along. Great men have the faculty of guessing beforehand that which becomes ere long patent to all; they are the scouts of the great army; they in their rapid and venturesome advance, can catch sight before the others of the smiling plains and lofty peaks. But in reality it is the army that has brought them where they are and has pushed them forward; it is the army that supports them and gives them confidence; it is the army which in them advances beyond its own lines, and the conquest is not realized until the main body in its slower but surer march ruts with its millions of footsteps the path which they scarcely touched and encamps its heavy masses on the ground where they first appeared as bold adventurers.

How often, in fact, have great men been literally

made by humanity, which removing from their existence every stain and every trace of vulgarity, idealizes and consecrates them like statues erected on the various stages of its march, in order to remind itself of what it is, and to become enthusiastic over its own image. Happy those whom legend thus sequestrates from criticism. For alas, we may well believe that if we touched them we should find at their feet a greater or smaller clod of earth. That which is admirable, heavenly, divine belongs nearly always by right to humanity. As a rule, good criticism must be on its guard against individuals and not allot to them too great a share. It is the masses that create, because the masses eminently possess, and to a thousandfold superior degree of spontaneity, the moral instincts of human nature. The beauty of Beatrice belongs to Dante, and not to Beatrice; the beauty of Krishna belongs to the genius of India, and not to Krishna; the beauty of Jesus and Mary belongs to Christianity and not to Jesus and Mary. No doubt it is not merely pure chance which has marked out this or that individual for idealization. But there are cases in which the woof of humanity completely covers the primitive reality. By this powerful labour and transformed by this plastic energy the most ugly caterpillar might become the most ideal of butterflies.

This labour of the crowd is an element which has been too much neglected in the history of philosophy. The debates are supposed to be finally closed when a few proper names have been opposed to one another. But no one concerns himself as to how the people looked at life, or with the intellectual system on which the age reposed; this, however, is the great motor principle. The history of the human intellect is, a rule composed in too individual a matter. It is like the scene of a play supposed to occur in a public thoroughfare in which there are at most two or three persons moving about. This or that history of German philosophy deems itself com-

plete in devoting separate articles to Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Hamann, Herder, Jacobi, Herbart. But where is the grand humanity amidst which they lived? That ought to be the permanent background on which the individuals should be shown. In one word, the history of philosophy should be the history of the thoughts of mankind. The current ideas of a people and of an age contain an unwritten philosophy and literature which should be inserted in the great total. It is thought that a people has no literature until it has definite and settled monuments. But the true literary productions of a people in its intellectual childhood are the mythical ideas that are not written down (the conception of a regular system of editing and the faculties implied by such work only appear among a people at a comparatively advanced degree of thought), ideas rolling their current throughout the whole of the nation, filtering tradition through a thousand secret rivulets to which every one gives a form according to his own taste. At the first glance, one would be tempted to believe that the Breton peoples have no literature, because there would be a difficulty in giving an extensive catalogue of Breton books really and truly ancient and original. But the fact is that they have a complete traditional literature in their legends, their stories, their mythological fantasies, their superstitious worships, their poems hovering about here and there. It was the same with the greater part of our heroic legends before they were repudiated by the cultured part of the nation and got into low company in the "Bibliotheque Bleue."

On entering the Spanish galleries at the Louvre we derive no doubt a great deal of pleasure from the close examination of this or that picture of Murillo or Ribeira. But there is something still more beautiful and that is the impression we derive from the galleries as a whole, from the ordinary *pose* of the personages, from the general style of the pictures, from the dominant colouring. Not a nude figure,

not a smile on a single pair of lips. It is Spain in her habit as she lived that we see before us. The principle of grand criticism should in like manner consist in grasping the physiognomy of each portion of humanity. To praise this, to blame that is to fall into a paltry method indeed. We must take the work for what it is, perfect in its order, eminently representing what it does represent, and not reproach it for what it has not. The idea that the author has made a mistake is altogether out of place in literary criticism, unless we are treating of literatures altogether artificial, like the Latin literature of the decadence. No doubt, not everything is of equal value, but as a rule a piece is what it is capable of being. We must place it on a higher or lower rung in the scale of the ideal, but we should not blame the author for having conceived the thing in this or that tone, and for having voluntarily shunned this or that order of beauty. We may criticize the point of view from which each work is conceived rather than the work itself, for all its great authors are perfect from their point of view, and the criticisms addressed to them are as a rule merely so many reproaches for not having been what they were not.

I have perhaps repeated too often, still I will repeat once more that there is a science of humanity which, I hope, will have as much right to assume the title of philosophy as the science treating of the individual; a science which is impossible of attainment save by the erudite trituration of the works of humanity. We need not look for any other motive in many studies whose object is the past. Why should the most noble intellect devote itself to the translation of the Bhagavata-Purana, to commenting the Yashua? He who has accomplished this task in so learned a manner will answer you; "To analyze the works of human thought, by assigning to each its essential character, to discover the analogies which connect them with one another, and to look for the reason of those analogies in the nature of

intelligence itself, which without losing aught of its indivisible unity, gets multiplied by the very varied products of art and science; to the solution of this problem the genius of the philosophers of all times has clung from the moment that Greece bestowed upon mankind the two powerful levers of analysis and observation (92)." Therein lies the only value of erudition. No one dreams of crediting it with any practical utility, apart from the fact that curiosity pure and simple would not suffice to ennoble it. Hence, all that remains is to look upon it as the condition of the science of the human intellect; *the science of the products of the human intellect.*

Both the ordinary observer and the *savant* admire a beautiful flower to the same degree, but they do not admire the same things in it. The ordinary observer only sees bright colours and shapely form. The *savant* is so delighted, is so enraptured with the marvels and secrets of its inner life as scarcely to notice those superficial beauties. It is not exactly the flower he admires, it is life, universal force which in one of its forms manifests itself in it. Criticism has up till now admired the masterpieces of literature as we admire the beautiful forms of the human body. The critic of the future will admire them like the anatomist, who penetrating beyond those perceptible beauties, finds in the secrets of their organization an order of beautiful things a thousand times superior. A dissected body is in a certain sense horrible to a degree, and yet the eye of science discovers in it a world of marvels.

Looked at in this way, the most eccentric literatures, those which, judged according to our ideas, would possess the least value, those that take us the farthest away from the actual world are the most important. Comparative anatomy obtains many more results from the observation of inferior animals than from the observation of the superior species. Cuvier might have gone on dissecting domestic animals all his life without so much as suspect

the higher problems revealed to him by the study of the molluscs and annelids. In the same way those who study only regular literatures which, in the order of products of the intellect, are as the big classical animals in the animal scale will never succeed in arriving at a larger conception of the science of the human intellect (93). They only see the literary and æsthetic side; nay more; they cannot even understand that in a grand and thorough manner. For they fail to see the divine force at work in every creation of the human intellect. For instance, what are literary works in France? Elegant and subtle bits of moral gossip, never majestic and scientific works. No problem is ever propounded; there is no perception of the higher cause. The science of literatures is treated of as botany would be treated of by an amateur florist who would be content to finger and admire the petals of each flower. The higher and grander criticism, on the contrary, does not scruple to tear away the flower in order to study its roots, to count its stamens, to analyze its tissues. But we should not infer from this that it relinquishes its higher admiration. On the contrary, the higher and grander criticism alone has the right to admire, inasmuch as it alone is certain not to admire blunders, mistakes of copyists; the higher criticism alone knows the reality, and the reality only is admirable. That will be our system, we who belong to the second half of the nineteenth century. We may not possess the subtlety of those masters of atticism, their delightful way of gossiping, their witty innuendo. But we shall have the dogmatic view of human nature, we will plunge into the ocean instead of taking a pleasant dip in shallow water, and we shall return laden with primeval pearls. All that appertains to the work of the human intellect is divine, and the more primeval, the more divine. It is said that M. Villemain called M. Fauriel "an *atheist in literature*." He should have said a *pantheist*, which is not the same thing.

CHAPTER XI.

HENCE we must look upon philology or the study of ancient literatures as a *science* having a distinct object, viz. the knowledge of the human intellect. To consider those literatures merely as a means of intellectual culture is, in my opinion, to deprive them of their true dignity. To restrict their influence merely to contemporary literary production is to take a still narrower view. In a remarkable lecture delivered before the Congress of German philologists at Bonn in 1841, M. Welcker in endeavouring to define the accepted meaning of philology (*Über die Bedeutung der Philologie*), looked at it almost exclusively in that way (94). To M. Welcker philology is the science of classic literatures, that is, of model literatures, which, offering us as they do, the general type of higher learning ought to suit all peoples and be made to serve equally in their education. M. Welcker appreciates the study of antiquity above all on account of the happy influence it may exercise on the literature and æsthetic education of the modern nations. The ancients are to him models and objects of admiration rather than objects of science. Still, M. Welcker does not altogether preach servile imitation. What he asks for is an intimate and secret influence, analogous to that of electricity, which without communicating anything of its own, develops a similar state in other bodies; what he blames is the attempt of those who pretend to find in the modern peoples sufficient material for

a moral and æsthetic education. Consequently M. Welcker only looks upon philology from the point of view of the classical scholar, and not from the point of view of the *savant*. As far as we are concerned, it seems to us that we should be placing philosophy in a much more certain and higher sphere, by investing it with a scientific and philosophical value with reference to the history of the human intellect, than by reducing it to a mere means of education and literary culture. If modern nations could find in themselves a sufficiently intellectual leaven, a running and primary source of original inspirations we should be careful indeed not to trouble that vein of fresh supply by an admixture of the antique. Tone in literature is the more beautiful in proportion to its being more true and more pure; to the scholar and to the critic belong the universal use and intelligent appreciation of the most diverse forms; a foreign note, on the contrary will trouble and worry the original and creative poet. But admitting that modern times could find a poesy and a philosophy as truly representative of them as Homer and Plato are representatives of the Greece of their days, even then the study of antiquity would have its value from the point of view of science. Besides; M. Welcker's considerations would not constitute a valid apology for all philological studies. If ancient literatures are only cultivated for the sake of finding models, what would be the use of cultivating those which, though having their original beauties, do not lend themselves to our imitation? We should be obliged to confine ourselves to the study of Greek and Latin antiquity, and even within those limits, the study of masterpieces only would have its value. But the literatures of the East which M. Welcker treats with great contempt, and the second rate works of classical literature, if less suitable as models for taste, sometimes present more philosophical interest and teach us more of the history of the human intellect than the most finished monuments of the ages of perfection.

The fact of classical languages has, moreover, nothing absolute in it. The Greek and Latin literatures are classical so far as we are concerned, not because they are the most excellent of literatures, but because they have been imposed upon us by history. This fact of an ancient language being selected to serve as a basis for the education, and concentrating around it the literary efforts, of a nation which has made for itself a new idiom long ago, is not as people would too often lead us to believe the effect of an arbitrary choice, but purely and simply one of the most general laws of language, a law that owes nothing to the whim or to the literary opinions of this or that epoch. In fact, to invest this denomination of classical with an absolute sense and to restrict it to one or two idioms as if they were predestined by an essential privilege resulting from their nature to be the educational instrument of all peoples is to misapprehend greatly the role and nature of classical languages. Their existence is a universal fact in the linguistic organism, and their selection, just as it implies nothing absolute with regard to all peoples, has nothing arbitrary for any of them.

The general history of languages has long ago demonstrated the fact that in every country where there has been an intellectual movement, there has already occurred the formation of two strata of languages; not through the method of one language abruptly displacing the other, but through that of the second emerging by imperceptible transformations from the dust of the first. The ancient language has been replaced everywhere by a vulgar idiom which in reality does not constitute a different language but rather a different age from that which preceded it; the former is more scholarly, more synthetical, full of inflections expressing the most delicate connections of thought, richer in its order of ideas, albeit that this order of ideas was comparatively more restricted; it is, in short an image of primeval spontaneity, in which the mind confounded the elements in one

obscure unity, and lost in the whole the analytical view of parts. On the contrary, the second dialect, corresponding with a clearer and more explicit progress of analysis, divides what the ancients united and shatters the mechanism of the ancient language in order to provide each idea, each connection with its isolated expression.

By taking the one after the other the languages of every country in which humanity has a history it would be possible to verify that progress, which is the progress of the human intellect itself. In India it is Sanskrit with its admirable wealth of grammatical forms with its eight cases, its six moods, its numerous terminations, its involved and powerfully knitted phraseology which in its modification produces Pali, Prakrit and Kawi, dialects less rich, more simple and clear which in their turn are analyzed into dialects still more popular, the Hindu, Bengali, Mahratta and other vulgar dialects of Hindustan, and in their turn become dead, learned and sacred languages; Pali in the island of Ceylon and Indo-China, Prakrit among the Djaïnas, Kawi, in the islands of Java, Bali, and Madura. In the region of India to the Caucasus, Zend with its long and complicated words, its absence of prepositions and its mode of supplying them by means of cases formed by inflection, the Persian of the cuneiform inscriptions, so perfect in its structure, are replaced by modern Persian, almost as decrepit as English which has reached its last stage of erosion. In the region of the Caucasus modern Armenian and Georgian succeeded to the ancient Armenian and Georgian. In Europe the position of the ancient Sclavonic, the Teutonic, the Gothic, the Norman, is below that of the Sclavonic and Germanic idioms. And to wind up, it is from the analysis of Greek and Latin, subjected to the process of decomposition of the barbarous centuries that the modern Greek and the neo-Latin languages have sprung.

The Semitic languages, though dead languages

to a greater degree than the Indo-Germanic ones have followed an analogous course. Hebrew, their most ancient type, disappears at a remote period, to leave the field absolutely to Chaldaic, Samaritan, Syriac, dialects more analytically constructed, longer and sometimes more lucid also, which in their turn become successively merged in Arabic. But Arabic in its turn too scholarly for the everyday use of strangers who are unable to observe its delicate and varied inflections, beholds solecism usurping the common right and in consequence by the side of the literal language, which becomes the exclusive property of the schools, there springs up the vulgar Arabic, more simple in its system and less rich in grammatical forms. The languages of the West and of Central Asia present several analogous phenomena in the "superposition" of the ancient Chinese and the modern Chinese, of the ancient Thibetan and the modern Thibetan, and the Malay languages in that ancient language to which Marsden and Crawfurd have given the name of "grand Polynesian" which was the language of Javanese civilization and which Balbi calls the Sanskrit of Oceania.

But what becomes of the ancient language ousted in that way from everyday use by the new idiom? Its rôle, though changed is, for all that, none the less remarkable. If it ceases to be the intermediary of the ordinary intercourse of life, it becomes the learned and nearly always the sacred language of the people that decomposed it. Imbedded, as a rule in an antique literature, the storehouse of religious and national traditions, it remains the patrimony of *savants*, the language appertaining to the mental and spiritual domain, and it generally requires many centuries before the modern idiom in its turn dares to emerge from vulgar existence to venture into the order of things intellectual. In one word, it becomes classical, sacred, liturgical, correlative terms according to the country where the fact is verified and signifying uses which as a rule accompany one

another. For instance, among the Orientals where the antique book never fails to become sacred, religious dogmas and the liturgy are generally confided to the custody of that obscure, scarcely known language.

Hence, it may be taken as a general fact of the history of languages that each nation finds its classical language in the very conditions of its history and that its choice is not an arbitrary one. It is also a fact that, among nations not very far advanced in mental culture, all matters of the intellectual order are confided to that language, and that among the peoples whose more energetic intellectual activity has forged a new instrument better adapted to their needs, the antique tongue preserves a grave and religious rôle; that of accomplishing the education of the faculty of thought and of its initiation into the things of the intellectual world.

Modern language being, in fact, wholly made up of the remains of the ancient, it becomes impossible to master it in a scientific manner, except by bringing back those fragments to the primeval structure, where each of them had its value. Experience shows how imperfect is the knowledge of modern languages with those whose knowledge is not based on the knowledge of the antique language from which each modern idiom sprang. The secret of grammatical mechanisms, of etymologies and consequently of orthography being altogether contained in the ancient dialect, the logical reason of the rules of grammar is utterly lost to those who consider those rules in an isolated way and irrespective of their origin. Routine, in that case, becomes the only method possible as in every case where practical knowledge is aimed at to the exclusion of theoretical reason. One knows the language as the workman who employs the methods of geometry without understanding them, knows geometry. Besides, being indebted for its form to dissolution, modern language will fail to imbue with life the shreds it has

endeavoured to assimilate, unless it reverts to the ancient synthesis in order to find the stamp that must invest with a new unity those scattered elements. Hence its inability to constitute itself by itself into a literary language; hence the utility of those men who at given periods, had to provide its education by the antique, to preside as it were at its "classicality." Without this necessary operation, the vulgar tongue always remains what it was at its origin, a popular jargon begotten by the incapacity for synthesis, and inapplicable to matters intellectual. Not that we should mourn for the loss of synthesis. Analysis is something much more advanced and corresponds to a more scientific condition of the human intellect. But it is incapable of creating anything by itself. Eminently fit to decompose and to lay bare the secret springs of language, it is powerless to reconstruct the *ensemble* it has destroyed, unless it resorts for this to the ancient system, and derives from its commerce with antiquity its spirit of constructing a whole, and of scholarly organization. This is the law to which all modern languages had to submit in their development. And the processes by which the vulgar tongue has risen to the dignity of literary language are the very ones by which one may attain to a perfectly intellectual grasp of it. The model of philological education is traced in each country by the training undergone by the vulgar idiom in order to gain its patent of nobility.

The historical utility of the study of ancient language is in no way inferior to its philological and literary utility. The sacred book to the antique nation was that in which were recorded all the national recollections; it was consulted by every one in search of his genealogy, the meaning of all the acts of civil, political and religious life. The classical languages are in many respects, the sacred book of the modern peoples. They contain the roots of the nation, her titles, the sense of her words, consequently of her institutions. Without it a great

many things would remain unintelligible and historically unexplicable. Every modern idea is grafted upon an antique stem, all actual development is the emanation from a precedent. To consider humanity from an isolated point of its existence is to condemn one's self for ever to remain in ignorance of it; it has no sense except as a whole. There lies the prize of erudition; in the re-creation of the past, in the exploration of every part of humanity; whether it be conscious or not of its mission, erudition prepares the basis necessary to philosophy.

More modest education, compelled to set itself limits, and unable to take in the whole of the past, adheres to the portion of antiquity, which, as applicable to each nation, is classic. And this choice which can never be doubtful is still less doubtful with us than with any other people. Our civilization, our institutions, our languages have been constructed out of Greek and Latin elements. Hence whether we like it or not, Greek and Latin are forced upon us by facts. No law, no rule has given them or can deprive them of this character which they derive from history, just as education among the Chinese or Arabs will never mean the acquiring of the vulgar Arabic or Chinese, but will always mean the acquisition of literal Arabic or Chinese, just as modern Greece owes its slight revival of literary life solely to the study of ancient Greek, so will the study of our classical languages, inseparable from one another, always constitute with us, and by the force of circumstances, the basis of education. Other nations, even European ones, such as for instance the Sclavonic nations, nay the Germanic peoples themselves though they were later on so intimately connected with Latinism, may look for their education elsewhere: they would at most voluntarily deprive themselves of an admirable source of the beautiful and the true; but they would not deprive themselves of direct intercourse with their ancestors. But as for us, it would be tantamount to denying our origin, to cut off all connection with our

forbears. Philological education cannot possibly consist in the study of modern language, any more than moral and political education can mean the exclusive study of actual ideas and institutions, we must go back to the primary source and take our stand on the road of the past to arrive subsequently at the full understanding of the present by the same road over which humanity travelled.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSEQUENTLY in my opinion the sole means of constituting the *apologia* of philological sciences and of learning in general is to group them into a whole and to bestow upon them the title of *Sciences of humanity*, in contrast to the *sciences of nature*. Without this, there is no object in science, and it exposes itself to all the objections so often directed against it.

The modesty of the means it employs to attain its end should not be argued as a reproach. Cuvier dissecting snails would have raised a smile from the frivolous minded who do not understand the processes of science. The student of chemistry manipulating his various apparatus looks very much like a navvy, and still he accomplishes the most liberal work of all, the inquiry into what is. M. de Maistre has depicted modern science somewhere as having "its arms full of books and instruments of all kinds, pale with vigils and overwork, staggering along on the road to truth, quivering and inkstained, and bending its forehead wrinkled with algebra towards the ground." A *grand seigneur* like M. de Maistre must in fact have felt greatly humiliated by such painful investigations, and truth was very irreverent indeed by putting so many difficulties in his way. He must have preferred the more easy method of "Oriental science, free, isolated, flying rather than plodding along, presenting in its whole appearance something aerial and supernatural, letting

the winds toy with its hair escaping from under an Eastern mitre, its spurning foot seemingly only touching the earth in order to get an impetus for its flight." It is the characteristic and the pride of modern science to attain its most lofty results only through the most scrupulous methods of experiment and to arrive at the knowledge of the highest laws of nature, its hands resting on its apparatus. It leaves to old-fashioned *a priori* the doubtful honour of seeking its support only in itself; it prides itself upon being nothing but the mere echo of facts, upon mixing no invention of its own with its discoveries.

The most humble methods are in this way ennobled by their results. The highest laws of the physical sciences have been ascertained by manipulations differing very little from those of the artisan. If the highest truths can as it were emanate from the alembic and the crucible, why should they not equally be the result of the study of the remains of the past, covered with the dust of ages? Shall the philologist who toils on words and syllables be less honoured than the student of chemistry labouring in his laboratory?

The few results attained by certain branches of philological studies constitutes in itself no objection against them. For on embarking upon an order of researches it is impossible to guess beforehand what may result from them, any more than one can know, in digging a mine, the wealth it may contain. The veins of precious metal do not lend themselves to prognostication. We may be on our way to the discovery of a new world; the laborious investigations undertaken may also lead to the sole conclusion that nothing is to be gained from them. But do not say that he who has merely attained this altogether negative result has wasted his time. For apart from the fact of there not being any absolutely fruitless research or any which does not lead either directly or accidentally to some discovery, the investigator will save others the useless trouble he gave himself. A

good many orders of researches will remain in that way like mines, exploited at some previous period, but abandoned since, because they did not sufficiently reward the workers for their pains and because they no longer afford hope to future explorers. We should, however, bear in mind that results which at a given moment may appear altogether insignificant may turn out to be most important in connection with new discoveries and new comparisons. Science always presents itself to man as an unknown country, he often enters upon it by an out-of-the-way corner which fails to give him an idea of the whole. The first navigators who discovered America were far from suspecting the exact forms and true relations to one another of those parts of this new world. Was it an isolated island, a group of islands, a vast continent or the prolongation of another continent? Only the subsequent explorers could answer these questions. The same in science; the most important discoveries have often been brought about in a round-about way; "on the slant" if I may so express it. Very few problems have been deliberately grappled with at the outset, "taken at the core." It was through fragmentary translations that Anquetil-Duperron began the study of Zend literature, as in the Middle Ages it was through very imperfect Arabic versions that the scientific authors of Greece acquired their first knowledge of the West. The celebrated passage of Clement of Alexandria on the Egyptian writings attracted little or no notice until the day when, in consequence of other discoveries, it became the key to the study of Egyptian monuments. The accessory may in this way become the principal in consequence of a change of aspect (95). The theologians who in the Middle Ages, occupied the principal scene are very secondary personages to us. The rare *savants* and thinkers who at that period conducted their investigations by the true method, and who at the time remained unnoticed or were persecuted, occupy in our opinion the first and fore-

most position, for only their method has been continued; they alone had issue. No kind of research should be branded at the outset as useless or puerile; one does not know what it may bring forth, nor the value it may acquire from a more advanced standpoint.

Physical science affords a great number of instances of isolated discoveries which for years remained almost without significance and only acquired importance long afterwards through the accession of new facts. For a long while students may pursue an apparently barren track, which they abandon at last in despair, when all of a sudden there appears an unexpected light; the discovery bursts forth at two or three points at the same time, and what until then had looked as a mere isolated and insignificant fact becomes in a novel combination, the basis of a whole theory. There is nothing more difficult to foretell than the importance with which posterity will invest this or that order of facts, the researches that will be abandoned, the researches that will be continued. The attractive properties of yellow amber were merely looked upon by the ancient students of physics as a curious fact until a complete scientific theory was constructed around that first atom. We must not expect a hard and fast system of logic in the order of scientific investigations, any more than we must ask the explorer to give us beforehand a plan of his discoveries. In looking for one thing one may stumble upon another, in the pursuit of a mere vision, one may hit upon a magnificent reality. Accident, chance, on the other hand claims its share. Universal exploration, a beating-up of the game on all sides, that and that only is the sole possible method. "We must look upon the fabric of science, as we would upon that of nature;" said Cuvier. "Each fact occupies its defined position, which cannot be occupied except by that fact." That which has no value in itself may possess a great deal as a necessary *means*.

The critical consideration of an object is often more serious than the object itself. One may comment seriously on a madrigal or a frivolous novel; grave scholars have devoted their lives to commenting works the authors of which only aimed at giving pleasure. All that belongs to the past deserves serious attention. Some day Béranger will become an object of scientific comment and belong to the domain of the Académie des Inscriptions. Would not Molière, who was so apt to ridicule the *savants* whose name ended in *us*, be more or less surprised at having fallen into their hands? The profane and every now and then even they who call themselves thinkers laugh at the minute investigations of the past by archæology. Such researches, if their aim were strictly confined to their own domain, would no doubt be nothing better than more or less interesting fancies of the amateur, but they become invested with the dignity of science, nay, in a certain sense sacred if one admits their connection with the knowledge of antiquity, which it is impossible to attain save through the knowledge of monuments. There are a great many studies which possess no value except with the view of an ulterior purpose. It would be difficult perhaps to find anything philosophical in the theory of Greek accentuation, but is that a reason to vote it useless? Certainly not, for without it, the thorough knowledge of Greek would be impossible. A like system of exclusion would lead to the revival of the witty argument, by which, in Voltaire's story, the education of Jeannot is simplified with a vengeance.

Besides, how many works are there which though possessing no absolute value, were highly important in their own days, on account of their opposition to rooted prejudices. We do not learn a great deal from Naudé's *Apology for great men wrongly suspected of magic*, nevertheless it may have exercised true influence in its own days. How many books of our own century will be judged in the same way by

posterity? Writings intended to combat an error disappear with the error they combated. When a result has been attained, it is difficult to realize the trouble its attainment has cost. It wanted a genius to conquer the domain that afterwards may have become a child's.

The researches relating to the cuneiform inscriptions which constitute one of the most important of Oriental studies in the actual condition of science afford one of the most curious instances of studies worthy of being pursued with the greatest zeal, notwithstanding the uncertainty of their results. I leave aside the Persian inscriptions, the explanation of which is complete; I am alluding to the Median, Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions, which, even according to those who have arduously laboured at them, remain undeciphered. How far they will continue to resist the learned onslaughts of the *savants*, it is impossible to say. But granting the most discouraging hypothesis, supposing they will remain an enigma for ever, those who have devoted their labours to them will none the less deserve as well of science, as if, like Champollion, they had restored a whole world; for even if this happy result should not be realized, its realization did not altogether belong to the impossibilities, and there was no means of knowing until they had tried.

In the actual condition of science, there is no work more urgently needed than a critical catalogue of the manuscripts contained in the various libraries. Those who have been engaged in these researches know how utterly insufficient they all are to convey an exact idea, how for instance, those of the Bibliothèque Nationale are full of mistakes and gaps. This, at the first blush, is a very humble undertaking, for which the merest pupil of the École des Chartes * would suffice. Nothing of the kind. There is no work,

* The École des Chartes is almost equivalent to our Record Office of which the Master of the Rolls has the custody, but it admits students subsidized by the State.—TRANSL.

requiring a wider knowledge, and all our most eminent scientific men, each examining the manuscripts within the most restricted circle of their own specific knowledge, would scarcely suffice to carry out the task in a thoroughly sufficient manner. And still, learned research will be hampered and remain incomplete until this work be done in a final manner. Even the Jews admit that in another hundred years the Talmudic-Rabbinical literature will no longer attract students. When these books shall cease to have a religious interest, no one will have the courage to tackle this chaos. And still they contain vast treasures to the critic and the student of the history of the human intellect. Had we not better be quick and utilize the five or six men of the present generation who alone are competent to let in the light upon these precious documents? I can assure you that the few hundred thousand francs a Minister of Public Education would devote to this would be better spent than three-fourths of the money usually spent upon the advancement of literature. But this minister should at the same time and beforehand don his armour against the epigrams of the "boobies" and even of literary men who will "fail to conceive why the money of the rate and tax payer should be spent on such 'tomfoolery.'"

It is the law of science as of every human undertaking to draw its plans on a large scale and with a great deal that is superfluous around them. Mankind finally assimilates only a small number of the elements of its food. But the parts that have been eliminated, are they therefore useless, have they played no part in the act of nutrition? Certainly not; they have been useful in causing the remainder to pass, they were so closely bound up with the nutritive portion that the latter without the superfluous could have neither been taken nor digested. Open a collection of antique epigraphs, and out of a hundred only one or two perhaps will be of real interest. But if the others had not been deciphered

how should we have known that among them there were not some still more important? To have published those that seem useless cannot even be deemed a work of superfluity, seeing that this or that one which appears to be utterly insignificant now may become of capital importance in a series of investigations which at present we cannot foresee.

The general design of the forms of humanity is like those colossal figures intended to be seen from a distance and of which each line does not show as distinct and clear as that of a statue or a picture. The forms are largely outlined, there is a great deal too much, and if we wished to reduce it to the strictly necessary, we should have to take away a good deal. In history the outline is coarse, each feature instead of being represented by an individual or by a small number of men is represented by large masses, by a nation, by a system of philosophy or by a form of religion. On the monuments at Persepolis the nations tributary to the King of Persia are represented by a single individual wearing the dress, and carrying in his hands the products, of his country; the latter to be offered in homage to the suzerain. Here we have a picture of humanity; each nation, each form of intellect, of religion, of morality leaves behind it a short summary, which is as it were the extract and the quintessence of it, and which is often contained in one word. This abridged and expressive type remains as the representation of the millions of men who never emerged from obscurity, who lived and who died in order to be grouped under that sign. Greece, Persia, India, Judaism, Islamism, Stoicism, Mysticism, all these forms were necessary in order to complete the grandiose figure, for in order to be represented in a manner worthy of them, not a few individuals, but enormous masses were needed. Pictorial representation by masses is the grand process of Providence. There is a marvellous grandeur and a very deep philosophy in the way in which the ancient Hebrews conceived the government of God, treating nations

like individuals, establishing between all the members of a community a perfect a mutual and reciprocal responsibility and dispensing with a majestic "thereabouts" his distributive justice. God only sets Himself the large, general plan. Each created being finds subsequently in himself the instincts which make his lot as mild as possible. The thought of how few traces are left behind by men, even by those who seem to play a principal part is calculated to fill us with terrible sorrow. And when we reflect that millions upon millions of creatures were born and died in that way, without leaving the slightest memorial, one experiences the same terror as one would feel in presence of utter annihilation or the infinite. Only think for a moment of those wretched existences scarcely characterized by anything, which among the savages appear and disappear like the indistinct visions of a dream. Only think for a moment of the countless generations which have been piled upon one another in our country cemeteries. Dead, dead for ever and aye? . . . No they live in humanity; they served to build the great Babel which uprises towards the sky, and each layer of which means a people.

I am going to tell you about the most charming recollection of my early youth; the thought of it almost brings tears to my eyes. One day my mother and I in one of those short excursions in the stony byways on the coast of Brittany which leave such sweet memories with all those who wander there, came upon a small village church, surrounded as usual by the churchyard, and we sat down to rest ourselves. The walls of the church of rough-hewn granite and covered with moss, the neighbouring houses built of primitive blocks, the closely serried tombs, the mouldering and overthrown crosses, the numerous skulls ranged in tiers on the steps of the tiny house which served as an ossuary (96), all these showed that people had been buried there from the most remote days, when the Saints of Brittany had

made their appearance for the first time on these waves. On that day the terror-stricken feeling at the immense oblivion and the vast silence amidst which human life is swallowed up was such as to haunt me still, and to have become one of the elements of my moral existence. Among all these simple, humble folk that lie there, in the shadow of the old trees, not one, not a single one will live in the future. Not a single one has stamped his acts on the grand movement of things, not a single one will count in the final statistics of those who have given the impulse to the ever-moving wheel. In those days I served the God of my infancy, and an upward look at the stone cross on the steps of which I was seated, a glance at the tabernacle visible through the windows of the church was sufficient to explain all this to me. And besides, the sea was but at a stone's throw, so were the rocks and the foam-crested waves, I could sniff the winds from heaven, which penetrating to the very brain, awakened a kind of undefinable and indescribable feeling of freedom and expansion. My mother also was by my side; and it seemed to me that the humblest life was capable of reflecting heaven through pure love and individual affection. I considered those who lay there happy. Since then I have shifted my tent and I account for this vast darkness in a different way. They are not dead those obscure children of the hamlet, for Brittany still lives, and they have contributed to the making of Brittany; they played no part in the great drama, but they formed part of the vast chorus, without which the drama would be cold and lifeless and destitute of sympathetic actors. And when Brittany shall be no longer there, France will still be there; and when France is gone, humanity will remain, and people will go on saying; "In days gone by, there was a noble country in sympathy with all that was beautiful, whose destiny it was to suffer for the sake of humanity and to fight in its behalf." On that day the lowliest peasant who had but a few steps to go

from his hut to his tomb, shall like ourselves, live in that immortal name (97); he will have contributed his small share in the great result. And when humanity is gone, God will remain, and humanity will have contributed to the making of Him, and in his vast bosom all that lived will live again, and then it will be true to the very letter that not a glass of water, not a word that has furthered the Divine work of progress will be lost.

That is the law of humanity; an enormous and lavish expenditure of the individual, a contemptuous agglomeration of human beings (I can fancy the modeller flinging his material about anyhow, and taking little or no heed of three-fourths of it that falls to the ground); the immense majority fated to enact "the wall flowers" at the grand ball conducted by destiny, or rather to figure in one of those multiple personages which the ancient drama designated as the chorus. Are they useless? No; for they also have made their show; without them the lines would have been thin and paltry; they have contributed to the splendour of the whole, which is more original and more grand. This or that nun who vegetates unnoticed, forgotten in her convent seems altogether lost as far as the living picture of humanity is concerned. Not at all; for she contributes to the sketch of monastic life; she enters as an atom in the grand mass of black necessary to that. Humanity would not have been complete without monastic life; monastic life could only be represented by a numberless group; hence all those who have made part of the group, however completely they may be forgotten, have had their share in the representation of one of the most essential forms of humanity. In short, there are two ways of influencing the world, either by one's individual force, or by the body of which one forms a part, by the ensemble in which one occupies a place. In the latter case the action of the individual seems veiled; but on the other hand it is more powerful, and the

proportional part accruing to each is much stronger than if he remained isolated. Those poor women, divided, would have been vulgar, commonplace, and would have made no figure in humanity; united, they represent energetically one of the world's most essential elements; sweet, timid and pensive piety.

No one, therefore, is useless in humanity. The savage who scarcely exists, serves at any rate as waste power. And as I have already said, it was but fit that the plan of the forms of humanity should be superabundantly provided for. The belief in immortality implies nothing else than that invincible faith in the future. No action is utterly lost. This or that insect which had no other vocation than to group under a living form a certain number of molecules and to eat a leaf accomplished something which still bears consequences in the eternal series of causes.

Science, like all the other [illegible] of human life must be represented [illegible] Scientific results should not be arrived at in a meagre and isolated manner. The final residue which will remain in the domain of the human intellect must necessarily be extracted from a vast mass of things. Just as no man is useless in humanity, so is no labourer useless in the field of science. Here, as everywhere else, there must be an immense waste of power. When we reflect upon the enormous amount of intellectual work and activity that has been engulphed for the last three centuries and even in our days in the periodical publications, in [illegible] views, etc.; we experience the same feeling that comes over us at seeing the eternal [illegible] generations swallowed up by the tomb, [illegible] one another down. But this is [illegible]; for if everything that is said and discovered were assimilated there and then, it would be [illegible] a man having absolutely nothing but what is [illegible]. After the lapse of a century a genius of the first order is reduced to two or three pages. The score of volumes

of his complete works remain as a necessary development of his fundamental idea. A volume for each idea. The eighteenth century is summed up, as far as we are concerned in a few pages expressing its general tendencies, its spirit, its method; all this is hidden away in thousands of books, forgotten by this time and teeming with gross errors. The biggest library could be filled with the books relating to one controversy only, such as for instance that of the Reformation, of Jansenism, of Thomaism. All this expenditure of intellectual force is not lost, provided those controversies have contributed one single atom to the fabric of modern thought. A great many literary lives, apparently wasted, have been, in fact, useful and necessary. Who, at present, bestows a single thought on this or that grammarian of Alexandria, illustrious in his own time? And still he is not dead; for he helped to sketch Alexandria, and Alexandria remains an immense fact in the history of mankind.

We can conceive no idea of the largeness of the method by which the work of science should be undertaken in a condition of humanity scientifically organized. I may suppose that it took a thousand laborious lives to collect all the local variations of a certain legend, such as for instance, that of the Wandering Jew. It is by no means certain that such labour would lead to any serious result; but it matters not; the mere possibility of finding in it some notable induction, which by entering as an element into a more vast ensemble should reveal a feature in the system of things, would be sufficient to recompense upon such an expenditure. For nothing is too dear when it becomes a question of providing a single additional atom to truth. Are not thousands of lives lost every day, what is called absolutely lost, in the furthering of the arts of luxury, in contributing a mere crap of nourishment for the pleasures of the idle etc. Humanity, after all, has a great deal of strength which absolutely perishes for want of employment

and guidance. May not we hope that one day all this neglected or utterly wasted strength will be applied to serious things or to the attainment of supra-sensitive results?

There are often a great many false conceptions with regard to what will be the mode of life in the future; it is thought that immortality in literature will consist in *being read* by future generations. This is an illusion we had better abandon. We shall not be read by future generations, we know it, we rejoice in it and congratulate ourselves on it. But we shall have contributed to the manner of looking at things, we shall have enabled the future to do without reading us, we shall have accelerated the day when the knowledge of the world shall equal the world, when the subject and the object having become identified, God will be complete. By accelerating progress, we accelerate our death. We are not writers who are studied for their style of exposition and their classical touch; we are thinkers, and our thought is a *scientific act.* Do people still read the works of Newton, of Lavoisier, of Euler? Their books are facts; they have had their place in the series of the development of science; after which their mission is at an end. Only the name of the author remains in the annals of the human intellect like the names of great statesmen and great captains. The real *savant* never thinks of the immortality of his book, but of the immortality of his discovery. In the same way we try to enrich the human intellect by our observations, rather than to make it read the expression itself of our thoughts. We would wish our name to remain rather than our book. Our immortality consists in the insertion of an imperishable element into the intellectual movement and in that sense we may say as of old; *Exegi monumentum aere perennius* seeing that a result, an act in connection with humanity is immortal by reason of the modification it introduces for evermore in the series of things. The results of this or that obscure book

which has crumbled to dust long since still last and will last for ever. The destiny of the history of literature is to replace to a vast extent the direct perusal of the works of the human intellect. Who nowadays reads the polemical works of Voltaire? And still, are there any works that have ever exercised a greater influence? The study of the authors of the seventeenth century is no doubt eminently useful to the knowledge of the intellectual condition of that period. Nevertheless I consider as good as wasted the time devoted to such study. There is nothing to be learned from it in the way of philosophical ideas and views, nor, I am bound to confess, do I conceive the result of a complete education to consist in the knowledge by heart of La Bruyère, Massillon, Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, Boileau, all of whom have but little connection with us. On the other hand no young fellow can be said to have terminated his studies without being up in Villemain, Guizot, Thiers, Cousin, Quinet, Michelet, Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve. I yield to no one in my admiration of the seventeenth century in its proper place in the history of the human intellect but I revolt the moment this heavy style of thinking utterly devoid of critical acumen is held up as the model of absolute beauty. Heaven preserve us from such a book as "L'Histoire Universelle," the object of a kind of stereotyped admiration, the work of a belated theologian, by way of a text-book of historical philosophy for our liberal rising generation.

The revolution which has transformed literature into journalism and periodical writing, which has reduced every work of the intellect to a work "of actuality" that will be forgotten in a short time naturally compels us to look at it from this standpoint. In this way the work of intellect ceases to be a monument in order to become a fact "a lever of opinion." Every one harnesses himself to the century for the purpose of dragging it in his own direction; the moment the impulse has been given, there

remains only the accomplished fact. All this suggests the conception of a state of things in which the privilege of writing will no longer be a right apart, but in which masses of individuals would only think of bringing into circulation this or that order of ideas without appending to them the label of their personality. Periodical production has already reached with us a condition of exuberance such as to entail oblivion to an immense extent and the swallowing up of beautiful as well of mediocre productions. Happy the classics who came at a period when literary individuality was so powerful. There are parliamentary speeches of to-day assuredly as good as the best discourses of Demosthenes. Many of the forensic speeches of Chaix-d'Est-Ange will stand a favourable comparison with the invectives of Cicero; still Demosthenes and Cicero will continue to be published, admired, commented upon as classics, while the speeches of M. Guizot, of M. de Lamartine, of M. de Chaix-d'Est-Ange will live and die only in the columns of the journals of the day after these speeches.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is, therefore, of great importance to understand the *rôle* of the *savant's* labours and the manner in which he exercises his influence. His aim is not to be read, but to insert a stone in the great edifice. Scientific books are a fact; the life of the *savant* may possibly be summed up in two or three results, the expression of which may consist of only a few lines or may disappear entirely in more advanced formulas. He may have recorded his researches in bulky volumes that will only be read by those who travel over the same special road that he did. His immortality does not lie there, but in the brief formula in which he has summed up his life and which in its more or less exact shape will become an element in the science of the future.

Only art in which the form is inseparable from the matter goes down in its entirety to posterity. And one is compelled to admit that our worth does not lie in our form. The authors of our own century will be read very little, but they may take comfort, they will be talked of a great deal in the history of the human intellect. The monographers will read them, and will compose on them curious theses, as we do on d'Urfé, on La Boétie, on Bodin, etc. We compose none on Racine and Corneille; for they are still read, and books are only written on books that are no longer read.

Be this as it may, scientific and philosophical progress is subject to conditions utterly different

from those of art. Art is not exactly a matter of progress, but of variation of the ideal. Nearly every literature has as its origin the model of its perfection. Science on the contrary advances by utterly opposite processes. By the side of its philosophical results which are never very long in becoming current, it has its special and technical part which is only intelligible to the learned. Nay, several sciences have as yet only that part and will probably never have any other.

Scientific specialities are the scandal of men of the world, just as generalities are the scandal of the *savants*. It is the result of our deplorable habit of looking upon that which is general and philosophical as superficial, and upon that which is scholarly as heavy and impossible to be read. To preach philosophy to certain *savants* is tantamount to proclaiming one's self a smatterer and a numskull. To preach science to men of the world means numbering one's self among the pedantic schoolmen. These are no doubt very absurd prejudices but they are not without their cause; because philosophy up till now has scarcely been anything but fancy *a priori* and science has only been an insignificant display of learning. The truth is, it seems to me, that specialities mean nothing except with a view to generalities, but that again generalities are only possible by virtue of specialities; the truth is, that there is a vital science which deals with the whole of man and that this science must needs be based on all other particular sciences, which are beautiful in themselves, but above all beautiful in their *ensemble*. The specials (if I may be allowed the expression) often make the mistake of thinking that the aim of their work lies in that work itself, and on that account lay themselves open to ridicule, everything savouring of result alarms, and seems of no value to, them. No doubt, if they confined themselves to making war upon generalities advanced haphazard, upon superficial observations we could only applaud their severity.

But they often seem to set great store upon details themselves. I can perfectly well understand that a date happily ascertained, the recovery of the circumstances attending an important fact, the elucidation of an obscure history may assume greater value than whole volumes of the kind frequently boasting the title of "*history of philosophy.*" But truly, are such discoveries worth anything in themselves? Does not it lie in the degree of their contribution to the founding of the true and serious philosophy of history of the future? What does it matter to me whether Alexander died in 324 or in 325, whether the Battle of Platæa was fought on this or that hill, whether the succession of the Greek and Indo-Scythian Kings of Bactriana was effected in this or that order. Truly, how much better off am I for the fact of knowing that Asoka succeeded Bindusaro, and Kanerkes to I do not know whom. If scholarship meant nothing more than that, the Hermagoras of La Bruyère who knows the names of the architects of the Tower of Babel but who has not seen Versailles is the true scholar, and all the ridicule levelled at scholarship would be truly deserved, because vanity alone could sustain people in such researches, and only mediocre intellects could devote their lives to them.

The moment it is thoroughly agreed that learning is only valuable by virtue of its results we cannot push the division of scientific work too far. In the actual condition of science, and above all of philological science the most useful work is that which brings to light new original sources. Until all the parts of science are elucidated by special monographs, the general works must be considered premature. And monographs are only possible on the condition of specialities within very severe limits. In order to clear up a given point the whole intellectual region in which it is situated must have been gone through, we must have explored all the outskirts and be able to take our stand in the centre, and with a full knowledge, of the subject. How much would not the works

on Oriental literature gain if their authors were as great specialists as the philologists who have created piecemeal the science of the classical literatures. The only works of use to science are those which may be thoroughly relied upon, and whose authors have acquired, through long habit, if not the privilege of infallibility, at least that vast knowledge which constitutes the assurance of the writer and the security of the readers. Without this nothing can be said to be definitely acquired, everything will constantly have to be done over again. One may say without exaggeration that two-thirds of the works relating to Oriental languages are not deserving of more confidence than a work on classical languages by a fair scholar in the fifth form.

I should be sorry if on this point the drift of this work were misunderstood. I have eulogized polymathy and varied knowledge as a philosophical method, but I think that in the way of special work one cannot too rigorously restrict one's self to one's sphere. I like Leibnitz who under the common term of philosophy unites mathematics, the natural sciences, history and linguistic studies, but I cannot approve of a William Jones, who, without being a philosopher fritters away his activity on numberless subjects and who in a life extending over forty-seven years writes a Greek anthology, an "Arcadia," an epic poem on the discovery of Great Britain, translates the speeches of Isæus, the Persian poems of Hafiz, the Sanskrit code of Manu, the drama of Sacontala, one of the Arabian poems called "Moallakat" at the same time that he writes "A Means for Preventing Riots during Elections," and several other pamphlets on passing events, the whole "without prejudice" to his profession as a barrister.

Still less can I forgive that culpable frittering away of a scientific existence which causes science to be looked upon as a means of business and robs the *savant's* life of its most precious moments. Did not Cuvier really waste his time when he devoted

hours upon hours that might have been so fruitful, to administrative functions which others might have discharged as well as he? A man only excels in one thing; I cannot conceive how one can thus admit in one's life a principal and an accessory aim. Only the principal has value, existence has not two aims. If I did not believe that everything is sacred, that everything is of importance in the pursuit of the beautiful and true, I should consider as wasted the time devoted to anything else but special research. I can conceive the fact of a very vast, nay of a universal scope of life. That the thinker, the philosopher, the poet should be actively concerned in the affairs of his country, not in the small details of administration but in the general direction, well and good. But that the special *savant* after having written a work or so, or after having made a few discoveries should claim as a reward to be absolved from doing any more and to be allowed to enter the political arena is the sign of a paltry nature, of a man who has never understood the nobleness of science.

Hence, the true interests of science demand more than ever specialistic work and monographs. That each paving stone should have its history is a consummation devoutly to be wished. There are as yet few branches in philology and history in which general work is possible with anything like full security. Nearly all the sciences have already "enacted" their grand histories; the history of medicine, the history of philosophy; the history of philology. Well, we may unhesitatingly affirm that, with the exception perhaps of the history of philosophy, not one of these histories is capable of adequate record, and that if the work of writing monographs does not assume more extensive proportions, will not be capable before another century. In fact, we cannot expect of him who undertakes those vast histories an equal special knowledge of all the parts of his subject. He will be obliged to trust for a

great many things to the works of others. And it so happens that on many important points, monographs are as yet utterly lacking, so that the author is reduced to gather here and there some sparse and second-hand notions frequently very inexact. Let us take for instance the history of medicine, one of the most curious and one of the most important with regard to the history of the human intellect. Let us suppose that a *savant* should undertake to rewrite in its ensemble the very imperfect work of Sprengel. By means of his personal knowledge and works already accomplished he might perhaps treat the ancient part in a definite manner. But what of Arabic medicine, mediæval medicine, Indian medicine, Chinese medicine? Granted even that he know Arabic, Chinese or Sanskrit and that he were capable of making useful monographies in one of these languages the whole of his life would not be sufficient to go even superficially over one of those fields still unexplored. Hence, in condemning himself to be complete, he condemns himself to be superficial. His book will be valuable only in those parts where he applies a special knowledge; then why not confine himself to those parts? Why devote to worthless labour which is moreover fated to become useless the time he might employ so usefully in definite researches? Why write long volumes among which one only may perhaps possess a real value? It is pitiful to see a *savant* in order not to lose a chapter of his book, condemned to write the history of Chinese medicine under about the same conditions as a man writing the history of Greek medicine after some trashy Arabic or mediæval work. And still he would be fatally condemned to do this by the very framework of his book.

The following is a curious experiment and I would wager that it might be made without exception in connection with all general histories. Present those histories to each of the men who have a special knowledge of one of the parts of which they are

composed and I am certain that [redacted] find his own part execrably treat[ed] have studied Aristotle are of opinion [that] badly summarized Aristotle, those who [have] stoicism that he has spoken superficially of [it]. I once presented my learned friend Dr. Daren[berg] with a copy of "the History of Philology" by Graefenhan that he might examine the medical part. He found it treated without the least understanding of the subject. Is it not very probable that other specialist *savants* would have judged the parts relating to the objects of their researches in the same way? So that in wanting to do too much one satisfies no one, unless, I repeat, the author of the general history be himself a specialist in one branch of it, to which branch he would have done better to confine himself.

The work of the nineteenth century then, should be the writing of monographs on every point of science, a hard, humble and laborious task, no doubt, requiring the most disinterested devotion, but a solid and lasting work withal and immensely lifted out of the common by the loftiness of the final aim. It would certainly be more sweet and flattering to human vanity to pluck at the outset the fruit which will only be ripe in a distant future. It wants a very deep-rooted scientific virtue to check one's self on this fatal slope and to refrain from rushing on when the whole of human nature clamours for the final solution. The heroes of science are they who capable of the loftiest views have been able at the same time to resist all anticipated thought and to resign themselves to the rôle of humble monographers, when every instinct of their nature would have impelled them to scale the high summits. To many, nay to the majority, we are bound to say, this is but a small sacrifice, there is but little mérit in abstaining from philosophic views to which they are not inclined by nature. The really deserving are they who while understanding in the loftiest sense the supreme aim

xperiencing the most urgent philo-
gious needs devote themselves for
erity to the laborious calling of mere
condemn themselves, like the plough
see only the furrow it turns. This in the
of the gospel is called; losing one's soul in order to save it. *To make up one's mind to ignore so that posterity may know,* is the first and foremost condition of the scientific method. For many long years science will still stand in need of those patient researches that take, or might take, the title of "*Memoranda for the use of . . .*" With a view to the welfare of posterity lofty intellects will in that way be compelled to condemn themselves to the *ergastulum* in order to store up in learned pages materials which but a small number will be able to read. To all appearance these patient investigators waste their time and their labour. There is no public for them. They will be read by three or four people, sometimes only by him who reviews their work in some scientific periodical (98), or by him who shall take up the same kind of work, that is, if the latter care at all to know what his predecessors have done. And still monographs are after all the things that live longest. A book of generalities is generally outstripped in about ten years, a monograph being a fact in science, a stone laid in the edifice is in a sense everlasting from its results. People may neglect the name of the author, the book itself may be forgotten, but the results to which it has contributed remain. It is a sufficient reward to a whole life, if it has provided a few elements to the final creed, whatever transformations these elements may undergo. Henceforth that will be the true immortality (99).

One might cite a great number of researches which to posterity will be summed up in a few lines, which lines again will imply whole lives of patient application. The Greek Kingdoms of Bactriana and Pentapotamia have been for some years the object of

researches which would already make several vo[illegible] and are far from being terminated. Is it at all likely that these studies with all their details will find a lasting place in the science of the future? Certainly not. And still they were necessary to show the character of the extent, of the importance and physiognomy of those advanced colonies of Greece; without these laborious researches we should have remained in the dark with regard to one of the most curious aspects of the history of Hellenism in the East. Those results attained, the works that have been instrumental in attaining them may disappear without much inconvenience to any one, like the scaffolding when the building is finished. And even supposing that the details remain necessary for the more intelligent understanding of the general results, the means, the machinery, if I may be permitted to call it so, by which the Prinseps and the Lassens have deciphered that page of history will almost have lost its value or will at best be preserved like bas-reliefs on the pedestal of the obelisk which they were instrumental in raising. "The scholars of the nineteenth century have proved——" the text will run. And that will be all.

Science should be represented to our minds as a building of the ages which can only be raised by the accumulation of enormous masses. A whole life of assiduous labour will only be as an obscure and nameless stone in that gigantic fabric, nay it may be nothing more than an unnoticed stone hidden in the thickness of the walls. No matter, one has one's place in the temple, one has contributed to the strength of its heavy foundations (100). The authors of monographs cannot reasonably hope to see their work endure in their proper form; the results they have put into circulation will undergo modifications, they will be digested and thoroughly assimilated. But through all metamorphoses, they will have the honour of having furnished essential elements to the life of humanity. The glory of the first explorers

sts in being outstripped and in giving their successors the means by which the latter can outstrip them. "But this glory is immense and should be the less contested by him who comes second, seeing that he himself will have no other merit in the opinion of those who will busy themselves with the same subject than the merit of having preceded them (101)."

The faculty of forgetting occupies a large place in the scientific education of the individual. A mass of special data more or less painfully acquired drop of themselves from the memory; but for all that we should be careful not to assume that they have been lost. For the intellectual culture which was the result of this travail, the progress accomplished by the mind through these studies remains, and these only are worth anything. It is the same in the education of humanity. The particular elements disappear, but the accomplished progress remains. There are algebraical problems for which it is necessary to employ unknown auxiliaries and to take very wide circuits. Do we regret, when the problem has been solved, the elimination of all this baggage in order to make room for a simple and final expression?

Therefore, the specialist-*savant*, far from deserting the true arena of humanity, is the one who labours most efficaciously to the progress of the intellect, seeing that he alone can provide us with the materials for its constructions. But his researches, I repeat, cannot have an aim in themselves, for they do not contribute to make the author more perfect, they are of no value until they are introduced into the grand current. We must admit that the specialist-*savants* themselves are mainly responsible for propagating strange misunderstandings on that point. Exclusively occupied with their own studies, they consider the rest useless and all those not engaged in the same researches are so many profane ones to them. In that way their speciality becomes a small world to them, in which they obstinately and super-

ciliously shut themselves up. And still, if the special object to which a man devotes his whole life had to be taken as possessing an absolute value, every one ought to apply himself to the same object that is, to the most excellent of all. Among the ancient literatures a man should exclusively study Greek literature; among those of the East, Sanskrit literature, and he who should devote his time and labour to a mediocre literature would only be a mere blunderer. Each of these studies has only its value in view of its place in the great whole, and of its connection with the science of the human intellect. The Oriental studies, for instance, are subdivided into three or four principal branches, to each of which a small number of *savants* devote themselves exclusively; so that the researches relating to literatures which are not the object of their studies possess no interest to them. The result is that he who writes a special work on Chinese, Persian, or Thibetic literatures may hope to have about a dozen readers in Europe. And even these, being engrossed, on their side, with their own special labours, have no time to trouble much about those of others and only glance at them superficially, so that in those studies, every one works for himself alone. A strange reversal of things. Are we to infer from this that it would be desirable for every Orientalist to apply himself to all the languages of Asia? Certainly not. But what would be desirable is that the savants who are most specialistic should have the true and inmost consciousness of their labours, and that the philosophical intellects should not disdain to apply to scholarship for the material of thought. For, I repeat, if the monographer alone reads his monograph, what is the use of writing it. It would be too odd if science had no other aim than to supply food for the curiosity of this or that man. Besides, the various sciences have problems in common with, and analogous to, one another as far as form goes which are often more easy of solution by means of

one science than by that of another. I am convinced, for instance, that for the undoubtedly philosophical problem of the classification and the reality of the species the naturalists would derive great light from the study of the method of the linguists and of the natural characters that help them to constitute the families and groups according to the imperceptible degradation of the grammatical processes. Let the *savants* look to it; there is a savour of vanity in that mania of condemning any and every study not made at first hand as being of doubtful alloy. Such a system, carried to extremes would lead to the shutting up of every one within himself and to the destruction of all intellectual and scientific commerce. What would be the use of monographs if for every subsequent work we were obliged to recommence. This defect proceeds from still another vanity of the *savants*, which in its turn is closely allied to the spirit of superficiality of which they have so righteous a horror, namely, the vanity of writing books not for the sake of being read, but for the purpose of proving their learning.

It cannot be repeated too often; the true scientific work is the work at first hand. As a rule results only preserve their absolute purity in the writings of him who first discovered them. It is difficult to point out how scientific matters, in passing from hand to hand, and deviating from their primary source become altered and warped, and this without the least illwill of those who borrow them. This or that fact is looked at in a light somewhat different from that in which it was first observed; a reflection is added which the author of the original work would not have made, but which he who adds it thinks himself justified in making. A general observation is put forth which the primary investigator would not have formulated for himself in the same manner. A writer at third hand will improve in that way on his predecessor, and thus, unless it reverts constantly to its sources historical science is always inexact and open to suspicion.

The knowledge possessed by the Middle Ages of classical antiquity affords the most striking instance of those imperceptible modifications of primary facts that lead to the strangest errors or to the most absurd way of representing facts. The Middle Ages knew a great many things appertaining to Greek antiquity, but it knew nothing, absolutely nothing at first hand (102), hence the most incredible errors. The mediæval writers think that they can combine in their own way the scattered and incomplete notions they possess and in that way simply multiply inexactness which at the end of three or four centuries becomes such that when in the fourteenth century, the true Greek antiquity came to be directly known, it seemed to be the revelation of another world. The Latin encyclopædists, Martianus Capella, Boethius, Isidore of Seville only compile school books and string the traditional data together. Bede and Alcuin know even less of antiquity than Martianus Capella and Isidore. Vincent of Beauvais has left the truth still further behind him. At last in the fourteenth century (outside Italy), inexactness reaches its furthest limits, the Greek civilization is no better known than India would be, if, to reconstruct the Indian world we only had the notions left to us by the writers of classical antiquity.

Several parts of literary history which as yet, have not been sufficiently endued with life by the direct study of sources afford instances of inexactness with which those committed in the Middle Ages will bear comparison. Brucker is no doubt a scrupulous investigator, but still the books he has devoted to the philosophy of the Indians, of the Chinese or even of the Arabs must be placed on the same rank as the chapter dealing with ancient history in the "*Speculum Historiale*" of Vincent of Beauvais. What then shall we say of those who came after him and who have only copied or arbitrarily extracted from him without the least feeling as to what is essential and what accessory? When people are

certain that the materials they possess are the only ones extant they may allow themselves to indulge, in that kind of ingenious inlaid work in which are grouped all the spangles at their disposal, on the condition, however, of making reservations and acknowledging their inability to determine the mutual relations of parts, the proportions of the whole. But when there are original sources only waiting to be explored, there is something grotesque in this dovetailing of scattered scraps, inexact, disconnected which are made into a system according to fancy and without the least notion of the manner in which the original producers proceeded. Hence the inevitable defect of all the histories of literature and philosophy composed outside the original sources, as has been the case so long with regard to the Middle Ages, as is the case still with regard to the East. Those who compose those histories only copy the same errors and aggravate them by adding their own conjectures to them. Try to read in Tennemann, in Tiedemann, in Ritter the chapters treating of Arabian philosophy. You will find nothing more than you find in Brucker, that is, nothing more than approximatives. We must definitely banish from science those works at third and fourth hand in which the same data are simply copied without an attempt at either completing or verifying them. Whosoever, in the actual condition of science, should undertake a complete history either of Arabian philosophy or medicine would literally waste his time and his labour for he would only repeat what is already known. Such a work cannot possibly be accomplished until eight or ten of the most laborious students gifted with the most special knowledge have devoted their whole lives to the publication, translation and analysis of all the Arabian authors of which we possess the text or the rabbinical versions. Until then all the general works in that direction will be utterly baseless. And it is very probable that even then nothing very marvellous

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